



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

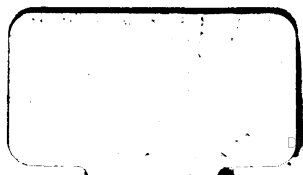
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

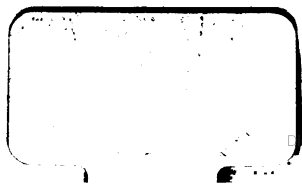
### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



★ PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY. FEB 25 1913

W. Lark  
Lark  
A. L.



★ PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY. FEB 25 1919

WALK  
LARK  
A...



## **'THE LARKS' NEST**





*Not in RD  
3/8 19  
OE*

# THE LARKS' NEST

*red* BY  
F. A. LARK

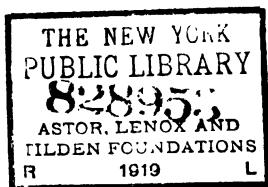


THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY  
440 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK  
MCMXVIII

*At. Sm'*

NEW YORK  
PUBLIC

Digitized by Google



Copyright, 1918, by  
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY

NEW YORK  
JUN 1919  
Y. 2. 1

**TO FATHER AND MOTHER,**  
*who were my stay in babyhood, my  
companions and protectors in youth,  
and the objects of my tenderest love to-  
day, I affectionately dedicate this book.*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>Prologue BUILDING THE NEST . . . . .</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>I MOVING TO ARKANSAS . . . . .</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>II FAMILY WORSHIP . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>III MY FIRST PANTS . . . . .</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>IV MY FIRST POCKETKNIFE . . . . .</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>V EATING THINGS . . . . .</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>VI SWEARING . . . . .</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>VII OLD SAL . . . . .</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>VIII FLATTERY . . . . .</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>IX GOING TO TOWN . . . . .</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>X HICKORY OIL . . . . .</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>XI SCHOOL GAMES . . . . .</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>XII CHEWING TOBACCO. . . . .</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>XIII MY FIRST SPEECH . . . . .</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>XIV A LITTLE MOUSE . . . . .</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>XV HAVING FUN IN SCHOOL . . . . .</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>XVI THE SPELLING MATCH . . . . .</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>XVII MY CONVERSION . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>XVIII SORROW IN THE HOME . . . . .</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>XIX CHRISTMAS TIME . . . . .</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>XX EARLY LOVE AFFAIRS . . . . .</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>XXI MOTHER'S LOVE . . . . .</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>XXII A FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION . . . . .</b>	<b>84</b>

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII SWIMMING AND PLAYING BALL ON SUNDAY . . . . .	88
XXIV JIM GLENN'S INDIAN STORY . . . . .	91
XXV UNCLE MILO . . . . .	95
XXVI JACOB . . . . .	99
XXVII LIVE RIGHT AND DIE RIGHT . . . . .	103
XXVIII MR. V.'s FAMILY . . . . .	106
XXIX MR. L.'s FAMILY . . . . .	109
XXX HUNTING BEE-TREES . . . . .	113
XXXI HOEING CANE . . . . .	116
XXXII WORKING TO KEEP FROM WORKING . . . . .	120
XXXIII CHEWED VESTS . . . . .	124
XXXIV THE LOCKED-UP LADDER . . . . .	128
XXXV STEALING TURNIPS . . . . .	133
XXXVI WAYS OF THE WICKED . . . . .	135
XXXVII THE PROTRACTED MEETING . . . . .	142
XXXVIII A JEALOUS CHURCH . . . . .	148
XXXIX THE YOUNG MEN'S PRAYER MEETING . . . . .	151
XL A DINNER FOR THE PREACHERS . . . . .	155
XLI THE PRESIDING ELDER . . . . .	158
XLII BROTHER FERGUSON'S SERMON . . . . .	162
XLIII THE CIRCUIT RIDER . . . . .	165
XLIV FATHER AS A COUNTRY DOCTOR . . . . .	169
Epilogue THE BIRDS HAVE FLOWN . . . . .	172

## PROLOGUE

### BUILDING THE NEST

IN the year 1844 there was a little Lark born near Greenville, South Carolina. The Papa Lark had come all the way from Germany, and the Mama Lark had come from England. When the little Lark was born they named him Augustus Henry, and called him "Gus" for short.

Gus grew to be a boy of seventeen, and at that time the Civil War began. He had always wanted to be a lawyer and he had made his plans to go to Wofford College to study, but he gave up his cherished plan and joined the Second South Carolina Cavalry regiment, under General Wade Hampton.

Gus served four years in the war. He was in many bloody battles around Richmond, Virginia, but he was wounded only once, and that was not a serious wound.

One day he bought a deck of cards, and was going to his tent to learn to play cards when he heard a pistol-shot and saw a man fall dead. He threw his cards away and went alone to pray. He promised God that he would never play cards and that if he lived through the war he would lead a Christian life all the rest of his days; and he kept this promise.

Down in Marion County, South Carolina, near the town of Little Rock, lived "The Sweetest Girl In Dixie." She was a little brown-eyed girl, with soft brown hair and a smiling face,—just the kind of girl that everybody loved. Her name was Mary Ann Proctor. Just before the close of the war, Gus Lark, then a dashing young soldier of twenty-one, was sent with other soldiers to this very place to collect cattle for the army and to look after some deserters who were giving trouble. Of course, he met Mary Ann, and that first look at her was the beginning of "The Larks' Nest." It is sufficient just to say that they loved each other.

After General Lee surrendered, the soldier boy went to his father's home, but his heart was still with Mary Ann down at Little Rock.

He took the money he had received for his service in the army and paid off a mortgage on his father's farm. He attended school one year, and then began his life's work as a farmer, and he was a good student, as well as a farmer, all his life. It was during this period, while he was on his father's farm, that he remembered the promise he had made to God during the war. He had promised to be a Christian, and this is the story of his conversion:

He, with some other young men, were working the road when a number of wagons came along. In these wagons were families that had lost during the war everything they had had, and they were going West to begin life anew. In the company was an old man. He had gray hair and a gray beard. He



stopped and began to talk to the young men who were working the road. He told them the story of his life and appealed to them to become Christians. He said:

“Young men, I shall never see you again, for I am going to the far West, and I shall die there; but will you not promise me that you will meet me in Heaven?”

With this request he walked on down the road, and was gone from their sight forever; but his earnest appeal lingered in the mind of Gus Lark.

He felt that he was a lost soul and he wanted to pray. So he climbed over a fence, went into a thicket, got down on his knees, accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour right then and there, and lived close to God all the rest of his life. He joined the Baptist Church, because there was no Methodist Church near; but later united with the Methodist Church, which was the church of his choice.

In the glow of his young manhood it was just as natural for Gus Lark to want a home of his own as it is for the birds to nest in the springtime. He had done that which every man should do before he plans for a home. He had dedicated his life, with all that the future held for him, to God. What was the next thing he should do? Why, find the girl who wanted to help him build this home.

Did you ever see a bird's nest when there was no mate? I guess it would look about as desolate as a bachelor's home.

He thought of nothing else but to go back and

ask Mary Ann to be his mate. She consented, and they were married at Marion, South Carolina, October 22, 1867. Their honeymoon was a trip to a little home on a farm near Little Rock, South Carolina. That night the family altar was established and the home was dedicated to God. The fire on that family altar has never gone out.

For ten years they lived on this little farm, then they moved to Arkansas, to the Ozark Mountains; and it was in this mountain home that the following incidents occurred.

# THE LARKS' NEST

## I

### MOVING TO ARKANSAS

IN the year 1877, my father sold his little farm in South Carolina and moved to Arkansas. We children were small, and the soil on the farm was not fertile, so it was hard for father to support his little family. He wanted to come to Arkansas where the country was newer and the soil richer. At that time cotton was as good as money, and when he sold his property he took most of the payment in cotton. He had an uncle in New York who was a lawyer. This uncle wrote father of a certain firm in New York that would pay him a good price for his cotton. He had seven bales, worth then about four hundred and fifty dollars. He sent the cotton to New York and started with his family to Arkansas.

On the first day of the new year we reached the little town of Alma, Arkansas. Father had in his pocket a little over a hundred dollars. This was all he had besides his cotton, his wife, and five little Larks, whose names were Janie, John, Fred, Julian, and Will.

We were strangers and everything looked so strange to us. We found lodging in the home of Mrs. Macy Howell, until father could find us a home to which we could move. In two weeks he had arranged to buy a little farm with a two-room log house on it,—just about three and a half miles northwest of Alma. We moved to our new home on the thirteenth day of January, a cold windy day. Ours was indeed “A happy little home in Arkansas.”

Father wrote back to New York for his money, which was to pay for his home, but after three or four weeks of waiting he received a letter which made even my big strong father tremble. This is what the letter said:

“The firm to which you consigned your cotton has gone into bankruptcy, and you can not get a cent of your money.”

Poor father; what a blow for him! He was a stranger in a strange land, with a wife, who was practically an invalid, and five children to support. He had no money, just a few household articles and enough provisions to last a few weeks.

That night we children were called around the log fire, a chapter was read from the Bible, and we knelt while father prayed. We were committed to God's keeping. Father asked God to help us and to be a friend to us in this time when we had no friends, no home, and no money. God answered that prayer by giving us friends,—true friends,—

who had money. They helped us by letting us have farm implements, provisions, and whatever else we needed, until we were able to get a financial start again.

Father did not buy the farm he had expected to buy. He moved to a cheaper one, and bought it on credit. It took a long time to pay for it, but I think it was all the dearer to us because of this struggle.

## II

### FAMILY WORSHIP

**LET** me tell you about family worship in our home—not that our home was an exceptional one, but that you may think of this beautiful and important part of family life.

Our family altar was erected the first night after father and mother began housekeeping. The evening and morning sacrifice has been offered every night and morning since that time,—each member of the family being always present. Father never began reading until all were there, no matter how long it took for them to assemble in the big room. Family worship became a habit, and we children loved it.

I heard the Bible read through five or six times in family worship. Father always read the Bible consecutively. He read in the Old Testament at night, and in the New Testament in the morning. He did not skip any part of it. He read Chronicles and all; not a single hard name was omitted. We children would sit entranced while he read the story of the journey of God's people in the wilderness, of Israel's wars, of Daniel in the lion's den, of Jesus and His love, and of Paul and all the apostles in their persecutions.

Sometimes we would get very sleepy. Many a time have I seen some boy's head bobbing up and down. Once I was sitting over in a dark corner and my head got heavy. It would go down and down, then I would raise it up, then down again it would go,—down, down, down, till *bump!* went my head against the wall. I did not feel sleepy any more. During the rest of the reading Father had a close listener and a "head-rubber." Sometimes a boy took a nap during prayers. The stir of getting up off of our knees usually woke him, but occasionally a poor boy was found continuing his prayers after the others were through.

My brother Will was called our "runt." He had a very large head and big eyes, a little body, and short legs. The Bible was interesting to Will. He read it often. One day he came running to my oldest brother; he seemed as excited as if he had found something that was lost, and said:

"John, I didn't know the Bible had a book in it called Job [short "o"]. Did you?"

We had a good laugh on him, for we knew about Job.

We were taught to lead in prayer early in life. Father conducted the family worship in the morning, and we boys,—when we became old enough,—took it time about at night. When Father was away from home we kept the altar fire burning.

I was fourteen when my older brother, John, died. Not long afterward Father was away from home one night. We were lonely that night, for we missed

John. Mother came to me, with the old family Bible in her hand, and said:

"Fred, won't you hold family prayers?"

I could not resist. Tremblingly I took the old Book, stepped to Father's and John's place by the lamp and read, then knelt and prayed. I am sure my prayer was short and broken, but I prayed. That old place by the lamp has been occupied by every boy in our home many times. Even yet, when we go home to visit, we have that blessed privilege. It is a sacred place to us. Glory shines around it, and Heaven seems near. Thank God for the family altar and what it means to the home.

Children, do you have family prayers? If not, ask papa and mama to begin having prayer now.



### III

#### MY FIRST PANTS

To a boy the greatest man in the world is his father. He tries to walk like him, talk like him, and wishes with all his heart that he were big like him and that he could wear his father's pants.

When it was announced in our home that I was big enough to wear pants, my whole being thrilled from head to foot. I felt that I was soon to be a man. The eventful day came,—an October day,—when my first pair of pants was made. I was that day to cease being like a girl and wear pants like a man. All went out of the room except Mother, Sister, and the new man.

I was first prepared to receive them, then Mother exposed to my view my little pants.

There they were before me! They were about a foot and a quarter long; but they looked to me, then, as if they were fully as big as Father's. They were beauties! As I see them now they were white-spotted.

I walked proudly up to them to step in, but I had been accustomed to have my clothing come down over my head, and now I was to poke my feet through two little holes and get in that way. I backed

off from them, shaking my head. Mother and sister coaxed me till, finally, I made another effort. But I failed to get into them the second time; the third time I failed; they were too forked.

Sister then began to offer me her playthings, if I would step into them. She piled the toys up before me,—lots of pretty things. They were all to be mine if I would only put on my little pants. This was too much for me. I poked one foot into the hole,—slowly,—until it made its exit from the opposite side. I then raised the other foot and put it through the other hole in a hurry. Quickly the pants were buttoned to my waist,—and there I stood, a very man!

Mother and sister bragged on my new pants and my fine looks until I began to strut about in them, as proud as a king. The house was too small for me,—a four-year-old boy, a checked waist, and spotted pants could not be held in a little place like a house, where there was no one with pants on. I rushed out to find my father.

I found him out picking cotton near the house. I strutted up to him and began talking to him, as independently as any one, always managing to keep my pants in prominent view. I walked like Father, acted just as much like him as possible; in fact, we were two men together. It took full bedtime and sleepy eyes to induce me to get out of my new pants. This event in my life will always be bright on memory's wall.

Fathers and mothers, remember that your boys

are trying to do just like you. Lead them to Heaven.

Not very long after this, one Saturday afternoon, Julian and I were down at the spring for a bath. Julian had put on his cottonade pants and checked waist. His pants were patched, but they were clean. He stood white and clean before me, and I was clean too, but Julian seemed to have his head on wrong. He should not be looking at me, but he surely was. Oh! I knew what was the matter; he had his pants on hind part before. I was amused from my bare feet to my white head. I just laughed and laughed at him. But I looked at Julian and his face was twisted from center to circumference, and he was bowing up and bowing down, just dying a-laughing at me.

I looked down at myself and saw my other side on this side. I, too, had my pants on hind part before.

## IV

### MY FIRST POCKETKNIFE

THE first pocketknife I remember to have had was one made by my oldest brother out of a piece of board and cornstalk. He had a sure-enough knife and I wanted one, so he made this one for me. The blade was made of a piece of wood and the handle of cornstalk. I was just as proud of my knife as I could be; it would not cut anything, but it was a knife; that was what I wanted.

But this knife soon wore out, and it became the ambition of my life to own a knife,—a bought knife. In the fall after I was eight years old the opportunity for me to have a knife of my own came. Father told me if I would pick seventy-five pounds of cotton in one day, he would buy me a knife.

I did. The knife was bought. To me it was the prettiest thing I had ever seen. It was a little white-handled knife with two shining blades. I lost it once when I was turning somersaults in the weeds, and my little heart was just broken. I hunted and hunted for it till its white handle appeared before me. I know there never was a happier boy than I was then. I ran and jumped, turned somersaults, skinned the cat, and squeezed my little knife till I was tired out;

and after that, every little while I would slap my hand on my pocket to be sure that it was there.

The principal things I used my knife for were: to make whistles, to trim the bark off apple and peach trees, and to make holes in my pocket. Not until the following summer, when my mechanical genius began to grow, did I find any great use for my knife.

My father raised wheat, and once a year the thresher would come to thresh the wheat. This thresher was the most wonderful thing on earth to us children. The going around of the big mules, the yelling of the driver, the *clatter, clatter, clash* of the wheels of the thresher, the separating of the wheat from the straw, the clocklike work of the machine, and the fact that we did not have to work out in the hot sun that day, and were going to have a big dinner, all served to make this a great occasion for us.

On this particular day of which I was speaking, I watched the men as they took the thresher apart. I observed it very closely, studied all the parts and how they were put together, and came to the conclusion that I could make a thresher very easily with my little knife.

At noon on a hot August day I slipped off from the rest of the boys, went down to a big sassafras tree near the house, and began to make my thresher. The sassafras tree has a bark that scales off each year, and it was out of this bark that my machine was to be made. The bark cuts easily, and I began by making little boards for the thresher-box. I made notches in their ends, for my plan was to build up

the box like a carpenter makes a log house. Try as I would, I could not make my boards fit and they would break to pieces. So I decided that I would leave that part until last and begin on the parts for the inside.

This part, instead of consisting of wheels and bands and wooden fingers, was to be composed of three or four wooden cranks turning in various directions inside my box, and all turned by a crank from the outside. These cranks were to knock out the wheat something like we boys threshed peas in the barn on rainy days. But the more I made cranks the more they tore up and would not work at all. My thresher plan got mixed up in my mind. How was I to fasten the cranks together so they could be turned by one crank? Utterly defeated in my plans, I finally threw my boards and bark down and went to the house. But I never mentioned my thresher failure to any one. That was my secret.

Children, we can no more make our lives what they should be than I could make my little thresher at the age of eight. If we try alone we will be ashamed of our failure in life, but if we let God teach us our lives will be crowned with success.

## V

### EATING THINGS

JULIAN and I once took a great liking for glass, and Mother found us one day, sitting down in the chimney corner, chewing glass. Our mouths were full of it, and we were just ready to swallow when she found us. A terrible spitting followed, and a mighty washing of our mouths. Neither Julian nor I ever wanted glass any more after Mother got through with us.

My love for chewing extended to such things as coffee-grounds. They seemed just to suit my taste, but I had to slip them from Mother; for she did not want my taste for coffee cultivated.

One morning,—a cold icy morning,—my appetite was calling loudly for coffee-grounds. They seemed to be just the thing I wanted. I slipped off into the kitchen and found our coffee-mill sitting on the table, plumb-full of good-looking coffee-grounds. I quickly filled my mouth full of them, and started to chew them. I had scarcely begun when I took a terrible sneezing and when I opened my mouth and let the air in I began to snort and puff and smoke and cry and frown and spit, and I just kept on doing this; but no relief came. I got scarce of wind, and seemed to

be breathing fire. I ran out to the well and began to eat ice. I iced and iced, till I quenched the flame in my lungs and ceased my weeping and snorting.

Truth says, "I ate black pepper that Mother had ground that morning."

I didn't tell her about it for a long time, though. Did you ever do anything like this, children? I didn't any more.

I never did like soap, but once Mother had some nice streaked soap. It looked just like good streaked candy, and I was always hungry for such good-looking candy. The more I looked at Mother's streaked soap the more it looked like candy. I looked at it, and looked, and looked. I reasoned this way:

"All streaked candy is very good; this soap of Mother's is streaked; therefore, it must be very good."

So I took a big bite of it. Was it good? Well, sufficient it is to say that I never ate any more good-looking soap.

Did you ever get a hot potato in your mouth? I did once. It was when I was a timid bachelor. I went into a hotel and sat down at the table and called for my dinner. It was a very nice place, and the waiter was a beautiful young lady. I thought that I must exhibit my best manners, as she would likely notice me.

She brought me a dish of hot Irish potatoes, and I began to eat them; and while she was out I slipped a whole potato into my mouth. It didn't look hot, but when I put my teeth into it, I found that it was



blazing hot. Just at that moment the young lady came in and stood before me, and, with a sweet smile on her face, asked me if I wanted anything more. I couldn't look her straight in the face, for great tears were standing in my eyes; and I couldn't talk, for I could not spit my potato out before her; and it was by far too hot to swallow. The fact is, I did not feel like I wanted anything more. I had one hot potato too much already. I did not see much pity in her face either; so I just kept my mouth shut, and let my potato cool. But it surely had a hot place in which to cool. When I could swallow, I found that my mouth was baked so perfectly that my tasting apparatus was almost ruined. Everything tasted very much scalded. My hot potato and my dinner cost me a quarter, but I felt as if the sweet young lady should have paid me a quarter for the show.

Children, I want to open my glassy, peppery, soapy, burned mouth and say:

"Do not take into your young minds thoughts begotten of bad papers, books, or talk. They are worse for your mind than these things I tried to eat were for my body. Mothers, fathers, what are your children's minds feeding on? Is it good wholesome food that you have selected for them?"

## VI

### SWEARING

I SWORE once, but I never have repeated it. I want to tell you about it.

My brother Julian and I were playing one evening near the house. I made the proposition that we swear some. I can not imagine where I had gotten my idea of wicked language, for we never heard it at home. We were very young. I was only six and my brother five. But the proposition was made and accepted, and we got ready for business.

Father had made a chicken-coop for Mother. It was a framed concern, about six feet square, with old palings nailed across the top. It was nearly four feet high. In the center the palings were broken, making a hole large enough for a boy to crawl down through to the ground, inside the coop. The top of this coop was selected as the place to do our swearing; so we seated ourselves and began to work. What wicked words came from our mouths! It makes me shudder now as I think about them.

After swearing awhile I proposed to my brother that we go down into the "bad place," as we called it. So we crawled down through the hole into the coop, where we stayed awhile and burned, then took

our seats on the top again and resumed our swearing, then down again into the "bad place," repeating the operation three or four times.

Then a peculiar feeling came over me. Our swearing and "bad place" seemed quickly to lose their attraction. A caught horse-thief could not have felt any meaner than I did, and to complete the wicked hour's work, I ran to the door where my mother was sitting, and said:

"Mama, Julian is cursing out here."

She happened not to hear me, so we escaped a good brushing up; but I am sure I did not need a whipping, for my conscience was whipping me enough. I ran and talked, hallooed, and jumped about, feeling like some one was after me and was going to talk rough to me and hurt me. Until this moment that evening seems dark. A deep shade seemed to settle down all about me. Wherever I went a great mad something seemed to be near. I was scared and horrified.

That night two barefoot boys were standing by Father and Mother, and were just as good as could be. They did not introduce the subject of swearing that night nor did they introduce it for ten or twelve years to come, for they did not want to disturb the family peace in any way. But neither of us has ever sworn since.

Parents, watch your five- and six-year-old children. They are not too small to listen to the wicked words spoken around them. These words make lasting impressions on their little lives.

## VII

### OLD SAL

OLD SAL, as she was called, was an old hooking cow of ours. She was a brindle cow and had short horns and short stumpy legs. She was all right except when she had a young calf, then she was awful. She was the terror of us children, and many were the runs we had from her. To see Old Sal with her head tucked down, with her tail elevated, and her legs spread out a little more than usual, was a sure sign it was time for us to run,—and we did it.

At breakfast one morning it was announced that Old Sal must be looked after. She was then standing guard over a young calf, about a quarter of a mile from the house, just beyond a thicket of old sumac and young post-oak sprouts. My sister Janie, who was a girl of about thirteen then, was appointed to do the tending, and my brother Julian and I were to do the guarding for her. We were as brave lads as e'er commission bore. We were about eight and nine years old, just the right size for such business.

Clothed with all this authority, in my mind I can see us as we emerged from that thicket that morning. I was a little boy with very light hair. I had on a little black hat, with its brim turned down toward

my bare feet. I had big white-looking eyes and a nose that turned up at the end. I was as fat as hard work and bread, milk and butter and mush could make a boy. I was in the lead and Julian came just behind me. Now he was just as fat as I was, and was a little bow-legged,—he had walked too soon. His legs were fitted into white cottonade pants, patched at the four points of wearout for a boy, and they struck him about half-way between his feet and knees. At that time we boys all wore pants and hats just alike. Janie came last in the procession. I will not describe her. I will leave you to imagine how she looked, for poor sister suffered enough without my saying anything about how she looked.

As we neared Old Sal she looked at us, then she looked at her calf. We could see mischief in her eyes. Some of my bravery disappeared,—I guess *evaporated*,—right then; but we advanced until we were within about twenty feet of her. Suddenly she raised her tail over her back, lowered her head clear down between her spraddled-out forelegs, snorted about twice, then made a dash for us.

Well, I did not feel that I should be expected to stand for that, so I turned my command over to Julian and made for a white post-oak snag about fifteen feet away, at right angles to the charging cow. I shot up the limbless, slick snag, like a squirrel, about five or six feet, then I threw my legs around the old snag, crossed my feet so I would not slide down, and turned, with my white eyes bigger than usual, to view the battle-ground.

When I turned, whom should I see but my brother Julian up a sapling near me, with his fat, white bow-legs fixed just like mine, ready to help me watch the battle we knew must be going on down on the earth. He had turned his command over to Janie.

Poor Sister! Old Sal was playing havoc with her. Charge after charge she made, but not for once did Sister turn her back. She jumped first to the right, then to the left, then backward, hallooing: "You Sal! You Sal!" all the time pounding her over the head furiously.

Poor boys! We hated to treat Sister this way, but we did not feel inclined to get down. It seemed as if our tendency were upward. After Old Sal had about got enough of fighting, Father appeared on the battle-field, and he put a stop to this quickly. He did not look around and see Julian and me up a tree. No, sir; before he had time for that we were standing real close to Sister,—ready for another run, as brave lads as e'er commission shun.

Sister got a feather in her bonnet that morning. In fact, the whole race of woman had raised herself fifty per cent in our estimation. We did not think such valor as this was in them.

Boys, I wonder how many of us have left our sisters when they were in great peril,—left them when they needed us most. Let me tell you something: The boy who is in every way true to his own sister makes a safe young man with other young men's sisters. We need young men who are brave, thoughtful, and courteous.

## VIII

### FLATTERY

CHILDREN, did you ever have anybody brag on you when you were quite sure they did not mean it?

Men who were candidates for some county or state office came to our home often, and when we great, big, strong boys would file into the room before them, they would brag on us. They would say such nice, complimentary things about us that it made us feel like we were not just ordinary boys, but that we were better than the rest of the boys. We did not know that they were saying the same nice things to all boys. They would tell us that we were going to make doctors, lawyers, musicians, and preachers, and we had never before thought about being so smart.

Sometimes they would give us nickels and dimes, and shake hands with every one of us when they left. If we could have, we would have gone right to the ballot-box and voted for every one of them. We liked the money they gave us, but we liked the nice things they said about us, too. Often they would invite us to come to see them. Once we met one of these men who had been so nice to us on the street of Van Buren. We knew he lived at Van

Buren, for he had told us so, and we thought maybe he would invite us to go home with him to dinner; but to our great surprise he did not know us. We could not understand how he had forgotten us so soon.

In the year 1882 the 'Frisco railroad was built through our country. The camp where the men who worked on the road ate and slept was not far from our home. We had some nice ripe peaches. They were large, yellow, juicy peaches. One Saturday afternoon, Mother told John, Julian, and myself that we might take a basket of these luscious peaches to this camp and sell them. So we gathered our fruit, filled a large basket, and lugged it down the mountain-side to the camp. A woman, who was in the tent where we were trying to sell our peaches, came out and said:

"My, my, what pretty boys! Where did you come from?" Then she called a woman that was in another tent, and said: "Come, see these pretty boys. My, my, what pretty boys! Don't you know, they have a pretty mother."

She said a lot more about our being pretty. She even said we were prettier than her daughter Mollie Jane. We boys were not accustomed to being told of our beauty; this was all new to us; so we were not courteous enough to thank the woman. We just stood and almost rubbed the skin off of our big toes, digging holes in the ground. But after we had sold our fruit and gone away, we began to wonder if we really were pretty, and we decided we were. We



thought we must be unusually pretty. The truth was we were just ordinary-looking children. We were not any prettier than the average child, but it took us some time to find that out.

Children, flattery is of the devil. The devil is a liar and has been since the beginning. Shun flattery as you would shun a poisonous snake.

## IX

### GOING TO TOWN

A BOY'S foot must be covered, so, when the cold frosts of autumn began to come and it got too cold to pick cotton barefooted, Father got ready to go to town to get our shoes. We could not go, for we could not miss a day out of the cotton field. Cold weather was coming and we could not pick cotton then, so the shoes must be gotten without our going to town.

The day set for Father's trip to town came. We had hitched the mules to the wagon, and we boys were all in the house waiting for Father to take his departure, when he said:

"Johnnie, go get me a switch."

This command scared us for a minute, for the words were a hot June day's cotton command; but the placid smile on Father's face soon relieved us of our fears. The switch was gotten. Father then said:

"Johnnie, place your foot flat on the floor." His little foot went down. Father made a mark just at the end of his heel, and another at the quitting place of his big toe. The switch was then placed on these marks, and his knife cut off a section just that long.

One by one every boy came to this spot and his measure was taken. The stick represented the length of our shoes. It did not matter how broad they were.

This was a long day for us boys. Toward night we tasted a little sweetness in our mouths, and a vision of red-streaked candy came before our eyes. For a package of candy nearly always accompanied our shoes. We weighed our cotton, and somehow or other, our cotton's weight was not so much as usual, but our minds had been beset all day with many thoughts about brogan shoes and so on, so, you see, our fingers had been hindered.

The feeding was done, and the bright moon, just peeping over the hill, was all that gave light, when the slow rumble of our wagon was heard. Supper was ready, but it must wait now, for the familiar "Whoa!" was heard at the gate.

Every boy gathered around the wagon; one got a sack of flour, one the big box of shoes, and two others took the mules from the wagon. In a few minutes all gathered in our big log room, and we examined the things. I heard Fleming smacking his lips, and I looked around and saw that Father had taken out a sack of candy, and was giving every one a stick. We all loved Father very much then.

We ate our supper of bread, milk, fruit, butter, and syrup, and then we tried on our brogan shoes. Brand-new socks were first pulled on over our three-cornered boyish feet, then our feet were slipped into their winter's home. Every boy had on his shoes, and our little legs just must walk some.

*Squeak, squack, squeak, squack*, sounded all over the house. Will came in at the door and his shoes looked a little wet, for he had been wading in some water to see if they leaked.

Much cotton was picked the next day.

When spring of the following year came our hats were old and flopped around our faces. It was decided that before we could go to Sunday School on the following Sunday morning we must have new hats, and we were to go to town when they were bought. They were to be fitted on us.

One day we put on our best clothes and went with Father to town. Father rode in the spring seat, and we boys sat in the wagon-bed behind him. Need I say that the wagon-bed was chug full of boys? Town was a new place for us. We were greatly interested in every thing, and we stared about considerably as we drove through the resident part of town down to the main street, where Father was to do his trading. *Pit-pat, pit-pat*, sounded our little bare feet on the floors as we all strung into the stores after Father. We saw the clerks smiling at us, and one of them said:

"Are all of these your boys, Mr. Lark? I tell you they are healthy, fine-looking chaps."

Father smiled complacently at us and proudly answered:

"Yes, sir."

We blushed and thought to ourselves we must be a fine-looking bunch. We had been feeling that way all morning.

After Father had gotten our hats he had some other trading to do and we boys thought we would slip out and see the sights. We went down the street, pointing at the big fine houses and talking as loud as if we were in the cotton-field. We saw some people laughing at us, and they looked at us just as if they thought we were greeneyes, but we did not feel green. Anyway, we knew we were not any greener than Jim Bostic who came out from town to our place and asked us if potatoes did not grow on bushes. We were strolling down the street when we heard a big squall. We looked around and saw Will making his little legs just fly down the street toward us. He had lagged behind and a big dog had gotten after him. He thought sure he was bitten, and I wish you could have seen how scared he was!

While we were in town Father took us down to see a train. We saw the engine coming toward us, puffing, roaring, snorting, and tearing itself to pieces. We were so scared that our hearts might have come out of our mouths had not our throats choked. Our eyes fairly stood out on stems as the big thing came nearer. Just as it was opposite us the escape valve burst and would have covered us with steam had we not already started to run. We were good runners most any time, but this time we broke the record. When the engine had passed almost out of hearing distance we ventured to stop and look around. What do you think we saw? Father still standing where he was. He had not moved. We

knew then that a braver man than our Father had never trodden the earth.

Father was in a hurry that day, for he did not come to town very often, and he had a lot of things to do. We boys could not walk as fast as he could and he got ahead of us. He had gone down to a street crossing and was almost across, intending to go up on the other side of the street. Julian and I thought we would catch up with him by going diagonally across the street, and not going down to the crossing.

We had on our little checked waists and our white pants, but we did not stop to think about them, or anything else. We waded in and were half-way across the muddy street, when Father's familiar voice said:

"Stop there, boys!"

We stopped, for we were in the habit of doing what that voice said do. We looked down and saw that our bare feet and our legs half of the way up to our knees had disappeared in the mud. We heard a chorus of voices yelling from both sides of the street. This was our first taste of notoriety. A moment later two pairs of bare feet were rapidly taking their pictures on the sidewalk that led toward Father. As we went flying down the street it seemed to us that the men were vying with each other to see who could open his mouth the widest and laugh the loudest. Father greeted us with one of his innocent, loving smiles, but each of our faces was

graced with a ten o'clock July cotton-field grin. Our feelings would not support much of a smile.

Our little brother Will had lots of curiosity. He wanted to see and know everything. His little legs, led by his curiosity, wandered away from the rest of us, and he got lost. When he could not find Father he began to cry; then he began to run. He cried and he ran, because he knew he was lost in town. Lost! I guess he thought the gypsies would get him. He ran till he saw a man looking at him, and this man had a kind face, so he asked him this question:

"Do you know where my Pa is at?"

The man said:

"Whose boy are you?"

Will was crying so, he could not tell him whose boy he was. Then the man asked him what his name was, and Will answered:

"Willie Lark."

"Oh! yes," said the man. "Yonder is your Papa."

Father's troubled face appeared from behind a bookkeeper's desk where he had gone to settle his account, and immediately Will's fountain of tears dried. He soon had a smile on his face and he looked like a different boy.

Next Sunday morning we boys all wore new hats to Sunday School,—new black hats, all just alike. The Sunday before we had wanted to sit on our hats to hide them so nobody would see them, but this Sunday we wore them on our heads. We wanted to wear them during Sunday School, for fear some one

would not see them. We knew that would not do, but we wore them every opportunity we had.

Besides having our new hats, we had the memory of a mighty happy day in town. I think of it now as one of the happiest days of my life. Some day I expect to take another trip, and go to a city,—a holy city, "The City of God," "The New Jerusalem." That will be a happy day too. God will give us garments of righteousness to wear when we go there. The Bible tells us all about this city. Get your Bible and read in Revelation, from the ninth verse of the Twenty-first Chapter to the ninth verse of the Twenty-second Chapter, and ask God to help you not to get lost from Him, as little Will got lost from his Father.

God is our Heavenly Father, and if we forget Him and get lost from Him while we are here on this earth, He will not take us when we die to that beautiful City He has prepared for us. We may forget God, but God never forgets us. Father was not conscious that Will was lost, but God knows when we are lost, and He calls us through the Holy Spirit to come back to Him.



## X

### HICKORY OIL

WE children could wear out clothes in a hurry. How many mothers have to keep late hours to mend their children's clothes. We poor little boys often had to wear patched pants.

We children on the farm received just two pair of pants a year,—one in the spring and one in the fall. When these were worn, they were patched; the patches were sewed on with thread made nice and smooth with an abundance of hickory oil.

Boys do like to slide,—at least, my brother Julian and I did. Sometimes we would slide on our sleds, sometimes on our jeans,—mostly on our jeans.

My father always had a sweet-potato hill near the house. This was a mound, inside of which he put his potatoes. To Julian and me this was a great hill. We were too small to work, except in cotton-picking time, and we had to have something to do. So one day we spied this hill and saw a special use for it. We climbed on top of it, then we began to slide down its sides. We slid clear to the bottom. What a fine ten-foot ride! We tried it again; and we slid and slid till we had the ground worn slick, and our pants nice and slick with dirt.

I tell you, children, that was a slick ride. Julian and I became perfectly delighted with our sport, and we slid till we saw our sweet mother coming toward us. We were not wanting to see her just then, but she seemed real anxious to see us. And she had lost some of her sweetness to us just about that time.

We stood up with the sliding part of our pants turned the opposite direction from Mother. Her keen eyes took us in "fore and after," and ere long she began to pour on the hickory oil copiously, till she had oiled most of the dirt out of our pants. We stood, during the painful operation, pouring out bitter tears, and bawling bitter bawls. When I raised my tear-stained eyes to Mother and said: "Mama, I don't think you should have whipped us, for the ground was too slick to wear out our pants," she did not seem to see the point, but we felt it on the end of the switch. Methinks Mother thought, also:

"Children, bad acts can not be made so smooth that they will not wear threadbare our characters when followed long enough."

Now I did love clay,—good red clay,—when I was a boy! Father one day put us boys to work on a big hillside. The sun shone warmly, the redheads sang soothingly, and we got lazy. So I took Flem, one of my little brothers, and went down on the hillside, where the dirt was washed away and had left pure red clay. I began to eat this clay. We were just having a regular feast of clay when we looked

up and saw the placid face of Father. We licked the clay off of our lips quickly and looked up at Father just as innocently as little lambs. Father said:

"Boys, have you been eating clay?"

"No, sir," I answered.

Father said, "Spit on my hand." And he held out his big hands.

It nearly choked me to do it, but I finally spit on his hand. The hills, echoing to our weeping and wailing and the *thump! thump! thump!* of Father's sassafras sprout, told the rest of the story. We did not like clay any more.

It seemed as if Father always had a hard job for us on a warm day. One warm day he had us dropping peas,—stock peas. We each had a bucketful to drop. We dropped, and we dropped, and it seemed as if we scarcely missed the ones we had dropped.

Row after row we dropped and the rows were long ones. Still there were lots of peas left in the bucket. The sun was hot and our feet were heavy. We were so tired, and we thought Father had enough peas. So Julian suggested we dig a deep hole and put the rest of the peas in it, and cover them up.

"Father does not know just how many rows a bucketful will plant, and he never would miss the peas," Julian said.

So we dug the hole, and emptied our buckets. My, how glad we were that we were through dropping peas! We felt rested just to think about it. Father

seemed a little surprised that we had gotten through so quickly, and he asked us if we had planted all of them. We told him we had. Afterward, when we talked it over we decided we did not tell him a story, for we had planted all of them. One day about two weeks later Father called us and said he had something he wanted to show us. He took us to the very spot where we had dug the hole and buried our peas, and what do you suppose we saw? Just as thick as thick could be, the peas had come up. There they were. It looked as if there were millions of them. As soon as we saw them we noticed Father had his hand behind him. We had not noticed this before, but instantly we knew what was in his hand. Again the hills echoed to our weeping and wailing, and the *thump! thump! thump!* of Father's switch.

There is a passage of Scripture somewhere in the Bible that says: "Be sure your sin will find you out." Clay will stick to your mouth, and sin will stick to your soul. You can not hide from God any more than we hid the peas from Father. God's eye is on both the evil and the good.

## XI

### SCHOOL GAMES

I LIKED to go to school. Our schoolhouse was named "Walker Schoolhouse," and it was on one corner of Father's farm. It was a boxed house, furnished with long benches without desks. Many interesting things happened there.

The rocky hillside that sloped down to the spring was the scene once of a great contest. The teacher said he wanted the path that led to the spring cleared of all rock. The school was to be divided into two companies. He selected the captains and let them choose their men. One company was to begin at one end of the path and the other company at the other end. What a contest we did have! Stones flew like hail falling. Every boy bent every nerve. Hotter and hotter grew the contest, as we neared each other. Up! up! Nearer! Nearer! As we came together a mighty shout went up,—a real plow-boy's yell. Of course, both sides beat. That is usually the way.

Did you ever see a snowball fight? Captains are selected, and an equal number of players chosen on either side. A line is formed, then the fray starts. The air is white with snowballs.

"Ho! Ho! Hit! Run!" cry the captains.

*Whack!* down goes Homer's hat with a white spot on it.

"Spat! Whoops!" cries George, as a big ball hits him on the seat of his pants, while he is stooping over to make a ball. The air is deafening with yells. *Sput! Sput!* go the balls. Jim and John rush together in a hand-to-hand fight. They embrace. Down they go in the snow. Over and over they roll. Jim fills John's ears with snow, then John fills Jim's mouth chock full, then Jim grabs a great handful of snow and covers John's whole head with it.

Like struggles have begun all down the line. The battle becomes more desperate when, *ding-aling, ding-aling, ding-aling, ding-aling, ding-aling, ding-aling!* goes the teacher's bell, and the fight is over. No one is mad, except Bill, who has a sore thumb, and Jim, whose coat-tail is torn nearly off, and Bob, whose heel is frost-bitten, and about twenty-five other boys, who are crying because of their cold hands; and the girls, because the boys have pushed them away from the fire; and the teacher, because every boy wants to get nearest the stove; but all feel better after the teacher reads the Bible and has a prayer. All are in a good humor sure enough then and they are ready for another snowball fight.

Pass-ball was a great game with us. In this game we also had two sides, with an equal number on each side; and we had two or three balls. These balls were thrown from one side to the other. The boy

who got hit ran to the other side. Once I remember seeing poor George, who was very fat, get started down the line. One side hit him, then the other, until he just burned and tingled all over. This tickled every boy,—except George,—nearly to death. George did not get tickled until Joe got burned just like he did and then he just giggled and giggled,—it was so funny.

The girls used to bring their dolls to school to play with. Some of the older ones got tired of their lifeless dolls, and induced us boys to be their dolls. They built great big rock-houses, and stored their cooking utensils and their bedding away in them, then housed us little boys in there. Of course, we had their dinner eaten before they had it cooked. Once, when they stored away a great bunch of us live dolls in one of their houses, while we were inspecting their furniture and testing their cooking utensils, the house fell down on us. It almost covered us up alive. Quite a doll-squalling followed. I expect it sounded more like mules braying. Limping, forlorn, and bruised, we dolls ceased to be dolls. We decided we would be men, instead of dolls for girls to play with.

The boy who plays at play-time is usually the boy who studies when it is time to study.

Children, play.

## XII

### CHEWING TOBACCO

I WANT to talk to the young people awhile about my first (and last) chew of tobacco.

I was attending my first school; had learned to spell in Webster's blue-back speller, and was forming close acquaintance with some of the boys in school. Among them was a young man about twenty-one years old. I was seven. Early in our association he showed a great attachment for me. He expressed his love by pulling my hair, drawing my ears nearly out by their sockets, and pinching me unawares. The more I would jump and scream and tell the teacher, the better he seemed to like me. Where I went he was sure to follow.

Mack (that was my friend's name) soon began to want me to take some of his habits. I guess they were becoming burdensome to him, and he wanted some one young and strong, like me, to help him bear them; or he just wanted to have some fun with me. He had a habit of chewing tobacco. I did not know what it was then, for we did not have tobacco at home. He seemed to enjoy it very much, and, no doubt, thought I would; anyway, I would be



more like a man. He would chew it before me, and show me how nice it was.

My good friend urged and begged me until at length I told him I would take a chew. He seemed delighted, and appeared to love me more than ever. Now we were close friends. Mack cut me off a great big chew. As well as I can remember, it was twisted tobacco, good old home-made. I stuck it into my mouth and began to chew it. It tasted a little peppery at first, and felt a little slick. I felt like I wanted to spit, but did not do it. I kept on chewing, it kept getting juicier and slicker. I did not seem to get any more like a man; in fact, I thought it was about the nastiest stuff I ever had in my mouth, and did not think it could make me become a man. But I would not back out. Spit it out! Never! It must go as other things I chewed went, so down went the tobacco,—juice and all,—into my stomach. I know I made a pretty face.

My good friend seemed to be falling in love with me more than ever, for he was laughing all over his face. Oh, he was perfectly delighted,—just laughed and laughed. I didn't feel like laughing, for I was having a funny feeling down below. My head began to get light, I got to swimming around, it seemed. My head felt as if I wanted to ascend on high, but my poor little stomach was so sick that it could not go.

I got sicker and sicker and sicker. Death seemed to stare me in the face. I went home, but did not care to go to mother. I went off by myself. I felt

too mean to see her. Off to myself, I swam and tossed and spit, sat down and got up, drank water and ate green pepper-grass until I digested all that stuff that a hog would not eat.

At the supper-table that night sat a poor little pale-faced boy,—weak, meek as Moses, and feeling small enough to put on dresses again; but having horror enough in his little heart at the chewing of tobacco never to want to chew it again; and he never has to this day.

If any of the young people who read this use tobacco, I hope they will profit by this experience and quit using it forever.

## XIII

### MY FIRST SPEECH

**WELL** do I remember my first speech at school. I was barefooted and had no coat on. I had practiced my speech over and over till I thought I could not forget it. I felt sure that I could sway the multitude of barefoot boys and girls in school, and I did.

I was nine, just the right size for such business. Others were delivering their "pieces." Soon the teacher called my name. I came forward, but my speech was a little mixed. Its four corners were making a great racket in my little head. I could hardly tell which corner was going to show first; moreover, I found that I had some other things to bother me. My hands were too light, or too heavy,—I could not tell just which. They just wouldn't stay by my side. I tried to hitch them up behind me, but I had too many fingers and thumbs to hitch well. I tried to sacredly lock them in front, but they would come unlocked. So I just turned them loose, and I have never known the direction they took. I still found them on me, though, when I sat down. My feet met at my heels and my toes pointed in different directions. They covered most of the floor of

my standing place; but I found that I needed a mighty foundation, for my knees were smiting one another. I just couldn't hold them still. No matter how much I pressed on them, they seemed to wiggle out from under me.

But I knew that I must begin my speech, so I made a dash at it. What? I found my speaking apparatus out of shape. I found some great big something slipping up and down in my throat. My jaws did not seem to work at the same time; my mouth was dry as July, and my tongue was double its usual size. In spite of all these things, I found that my words were running out of my mouth. Six or seven flowed out when that great big chunk in my throat slipped up square in the lower part of my mouth, tying a pitiful "Ooh!"—drawn out long,—on the tale of a word. I found a sickly grin running out of each corner of my mouth, spreading up over my face, circling around my eyes; there it came in contact with some weeping and wailing that was starting down my cheeks. A mixture of laughing and crying ran out with my words, smashed onto the tails with pitiful "oohs!"

They told me I looked a little idiotic with all these things running out of me and wiggling about me. Finally, the whole four-cornered thing got out, by a little help on my part, and it was this:

I went down to the turkey pen  
And fell upon my knees;  
Liked to have laughed myself to death,  
Just to hear the turkey sneeze.

I sat down some way,—I don't know just how,—and my barefooted audience was just swaying before me,—laughing.

Children, I said then that I would conquer these embarrassments. I am still trying. Try to conquer all obstacles. Great men and women come of children that conquer little things in early life,—and all through life.

## XIV

### A LITTLE MOUSE

ONE of my early childhood teachers was Prof. Marsh Smith. He was a man whom we all loved; a model teacher,—patient, kind, and firm, and a pure Christian gentleman. May I not say, he teaches poorly who does not know Jesus and cannot teach of Him.

During his term of school, the mice were tame and very numerous around our schoolhouse. They would come out into the schoolroom and play about on the floor. Everything is funny that happens in the schoolroom when the teacher is not looking; and,—well, a little mouse could just nearly tickle me to death. I could imagine one running up Jim's breeches' leg, or I could see poor Jane scratching, screaming, and jumping as one would run toward her. My imagination could work on me till I would, accidentally, laugh out loud. Then to my books quickly I would go.

On one morning a little mouse got very frisky, and played around till it finished its play on top of a joint of stovepipe that stood over in one corner of the schoolroom. Nearly every boy and girl had an eye on little mousie's movements, and the other

eye divided time between its book and teacher. The mouse, after it had reached the top of the pipe, slowly began to descend on the inside. One of the larger boys, who had a far-reaching mind, saw some future fun in a move like that. He quietly,—very quietly for two reasons,—slipped over to the pipe and pushed a broad geography under the end next to the floor. He then set the pipe squarely on that end, and, of course, little mousie was a prisoner. This move came near bursting many little “tickle-boxes” wide open; but we swallowed most of our laugh and managed to keep it on the inside, while we began to meditate upon what we should do with our prisoner.

The coming of the noon hour gave us boys time to hold a consultation. After a careful discussion, it was decided to take our mouse, pipe, book, and all, out away from the house and anything that it might hide under and turn it loose in the presence of the whole school,—that is, we would have a mouse-chase.

The idea took hold of the school like fire in dry stubble. The teacher learned our plan, but the idea was so funny that he forgot to give us the scolding due us. The excitement ran higher and higher as the minutes slipped past till the time arrived for the chase.

Now everything was ready. Two boys, strong and reliable, were delegated to carry the mouse to the place of execution. These two boys got one on each side of the pipe and carefully lifted it from

the floor and gently carried it out of the house. On the outside a procession formed and followed the two mouse-carriers. The company of forty-five or fifty pupils was carefully guarded by our kind teacher, who brought up the rear,—of course, to see that no boy got into a fight over the mouse-chase(?). He was accompanied by our senior boys, one of whom was J. J. Galloway, who came along, of course, to see that we wild boys did not run over and kill our teacher(?).

The procession slowly moved to the selected battle-ground. The mouse-carriers reached the spot selected. They stopped. One took hold of the pipe, the other the geography. All was still. Breathless suspense settled down over the whole company of children and teacher. Every boy had a stick, rock, tin can, or something in his hand. The boy removed the book. The pipe pointed open-mouthed toward the ground, and the girls fixed their mouths for the customary screams; the boys drew their weapons, but no mouse hit the ground. A little knocking and a lot of peeping inside the pipe revealed the fact that no mouse was there,—and he had not been for some time. The teacher and seniors were summoned by very urgent calls to hasten back to the house. We boys liked to have died laughing at—we didn't know just exactly what, 'less it was at the other boys laughing so, or at the mouse that didn't drop out, or because we didn't have anything else in particular to do.

In my imagination, I can just see little mousie, as



we entered the schoolroom at "books," poking his little head out of a hole in the southwest corner of our schoolroom, smiling at us, and in a laughing little squeaky voice saying:

"Children, do not in life let the opportunity to improve your minds slip from you as you let me slip away to-day."

## XV

### HAVING FUN IN SCHOOL

THINGS that happen in school are a great deal funnier than if they had happened anywhere else. In school I just had to laugh at almost nothing. It just tickled me so I could not stand it. One day the boy just behind me did something funny. I felt that I just must laugh, and I did, and about the next thing I knew I was standing on the floor and did not feel like laughing. I had something in my throat that I could not swallow, and I felt just as if some boy had kicked me in the stomach and knocked the breath out of me.

The first day Will went to school he did not know what to do with himself. He stood up part of the time, sat down part of the time, and lay down the rest of the time. Fifteen of us boys occupied two of our long, deskless seats, when suddenly Will jumped up and cried out:

"Teacher, teacher, there's a mouse!"

Fifteen boys' mouths flew wide open, and a big laugh came forth. Our teacher must not have appreciated our laugh, for fifteen boys soon stood all in a row on the floor, studying their lessons.

George and I were great friends at school. We

had often slipped from one seat to another during study hours, and the teacher had not caught us. So, one day George said to me:

"Let's get on every bench in the house between this and time for school to be out."

"All right," I agreed. And we did. We studied very hard that afternoon,—when the teacher was looking at us. As we finished our task, we felt that we had succeeded so well, we would do a little more: we would go up on the platform into the pulpit. Our schoolhouse was then used for preaching, and it had a platform about a foot high, with a stand about four feet high. There was a pine bench behind this stand for the preacher to sit on. We reached this stand all right and were having a great time on the preacher's bench, when we saw the teacher looking around the pulpit at us. We were bowed very low, but, the first look we got, we knew we were in trouble.

The teacher remarked that he had caught us, and we felt the same way. He invited us young ministers (of meanness) down from the pulpit, so that we might preach a silent sermon for his school. And we preached it. He told George to point his finger at the stovepipe and just keep a pointing. He told me to stick my finger through a hole in the window glass and shoot at a hickory tree. I shot, and shot, and shot, but I guess I did not hit it, for the teacher kept me shooting for fifteen minutes. The whole school was delighted with our sermon, for every one, except George and me, just laughed and

laughed. We were two humble ministers, shooting eloquently the true message that wrong fun wrongs us.

There are two kinds of fun, right fun and wrong fun. Right fun helps us and wrong fun hurts us. Don't get them mixed, children.

## XVI

### THE SPELLING MATCH

ON Friday afternoon we had a spelling match instead of our regular lessons. The teacher said that James and Bessie might choose up. There was a long aisle between the two rows of benches. James stood on one side of this long aisle and Bessie stood on the other side. The teacher stood between, with a Webster's blue-back "Spelling Book" in his hand; and he said:

"I have a number, somewhere between one and ten, written on this paper; the one who guesses nearest to it may have the first choice."

Bessie, because she was a girl, was given the first guess.

"I guess seven," she said.

"Five," said James.

"Four is the number," said the teacher.

James chose Mary, who was a good speller, and incidentally his best girl. From the blush on Bessie's face, we knew she wanted to take Jo, but she took Minnie instead. All of the good spellers were taken first, and every one was anxious for his name to be called next. A long line was soon formed, with the little pupils at the end. All was ready for spell-

ing. Bessie had the first word to spell. The word was to pass from one side to the other. When one missed a word he must sit down.

The word sounded out, pronounced clearly and distinctly by the teacher.

"Abase"; "Debase"; "Incase:"—on they went down the line, until the word reached the smaller children; then the teacher said:

"I will give the smaller ones easier words. Johnnie, you may spell 'baker.'"

Johnnie threw his little head back and spelled:

"B-a, ba, c-e-r, cer, baker."

"No; next," said the teacher. "B-a-c, ba, k-e-r, ker, baker."

"Next," said the teacher.

Bill was desperate, and he spelled, "B-a-a-k, bake, k-e-r, ker,—baker."

Jake had been so tickled all the time the others were spelling that he could not stand still, and now it was his time. He put on a wise look, drew one foot up, and let it rest on the knee of the other limb, and spelled very loudly:

"B-a-c-k, bake, k-e-r, ker,—baker."

The word passed on down the line, until it reached little Polly, who had just the day before learned to spell "baker." Her eyes just sparkled and danced. She knew she could spell it, and she did.

"Pshaw," said Bill, "I could have spelled it that way!"

One would miss this word, and another would

miss that word, till James and Bessie, the champion spellers of the school, stood alone on the floor. Farther and farther the teacher turned in the old speller, until he was almost through the book. Neither one missed. James stood firm, and Bessie had determination written on her face. The whole room sat in breathless suspense. The teacher and the spellers' voices were the only sounds that could be heard. The thought in every one's mind was which one will miss? The teacher gave out the word "Trunnion" to James. He spelled it "t-r-u-n-i-o-n." The teacher said:

"I think you spelled it correctly, James, but please spell it again."

Several of the larger boys and girls said that he spelled it right. Now James was a good student. He was working hard for the scholarship prize, and Bessie was his closest competitor. Perfect spelling in a spelling-match counted for several points. James was ambitious and dearly loved to gain a victory. He had not missed a word during that term of school. For a moment he hesitated, a flush of manly pride played over his face, and tears came into his eyes as he said:

"I spelled it wrong, I spelled it t-r-u-n-i-o-n."

The teacher passed the word to Bessie. She spelled it correctly. Her side had gained, and they were cheering loudly when Bessie said:

"Teacher, please do not allow my side to cheer. I do not think it right. I would rather be able to tell the truth as James did than to be the champion

speller of the school. I for one say, three cheers for James."

The whole school caught the spirit of Bessie's modest speech, and a chorus of voices shouted: "Hurrah for James! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

And do you not think it would have been quite appropriate to have shouted: "Hurrah for unselfish Bessie?"

The teacher told them that it was sometimes hard to be honest, but that honesty always paid. He said:

"I would rather be honest, as James has been this afternoon, than to own the world and not be honest."

A perfectly drilled army can gain a victory in this world, but it takes a child of God to gain a victory such as either James or Bessie gained.

Children, try to be like James and Bessie.



## XVII

### MY CONVERSION

SOME grown people say that children ought not to give their hearts to Jesus, because they do not know what they are doing. I was converted when I was eleven years old. I believe I knew just as much about what I was doing as any grown person would know, and I was so happy.

We always had family prayers,—night and morning,—in our home. We children were taught from the beginning to love our Savior. How we did love to sit and listen to the Bible read!

I remember having told my older brother,—when I was seven,—that I would be a preacher, but I do not remember then to have had any conviction of sin. When I was ten I remember having determined that I would seek Christ. Rev. N. G. Davis was our pastor then. He is now in Heaven. That year he held his meeting in August. Instead of preaching and working for the salvation of sinners, he preached a series of doctrinal sermons. He did not make a single appeal to us who were lost.

How sad I was when the meeting closed and I was not saved! My heart was burdened, and that

night, after all the family had retired and the lights were out, I got out of bed and fell on my knees and prayed and cried as if my heart would break. I told God I would give my heart to Him at the next meeting. I thought I had to be converted at the protracted meeting. I could have been saved that night if some one had only talked to me and given me instructions. Perhaps there were souls lost forever because our pastor did not appeal to them to give their hearts to God. I am glad that I told God on my knees that night after the meeting had closed, that, if He would spare my life for another year, I would give my heart to Him.

When another year had come and our meeting started, we had as a leader Rev. C. B. Moseley. We all loved him. I was still under deep conviction and came to the altar when the opportunity was given. The night I was converted, Rev. V. V. Harlan preached one of his stirring sermons. He made a strong appeal to us to come to the altar. Others went, but I hesitated. In a moment my older brother came to me, laid his hand on my head and asked me to go with him to the altar. I began to cry, and ran to the altar just as quickly as possible. I remember distinctly my thoughts and feelings. In despair, I seemed to be going down a dark road to Hell. I looked back and saw mother and father, brothers and sisters, going up a beautiful, shining way. I was all alone in this dark road. Just at that moment I raised my very being to God and cried for mercy. The next thing I remember I was stand-

ing on my feet. I saw the happy countenance of Father and Brother Moseley, who were right by me. My very soul was filled with light. My whole being thrilled and quivered as wave after wave of the divine light rolled into my soul. I felt a song in my heart that I had never known before. 'It seemed to come to me from above and it was a new, sweet song. I remember as I rode home in our wagon that night that I seemed to hear sweet music in the skies. I had never heard anything like it before. I could almost translate it, but words could not have expressed it. My soul was then lifted into Heaven. Oh, how happy I was! I wanted to get out of the wagon and run a nearer way home and tell Mother what a Savior I had found.

O children, how sweet it is to give our hearts to Jesus while we are young! He will make us so happy, and what a blessed life we can live!

Have you given your heart to Jesus?

## XVIII

### SORROW IN THE HOME

CHILDREN, I will tell you about some of the sad things that occurred in our home on the farm. Sad events come into every home, some time. Do you have a little grave in the graveyard where a little brother or sister sleeps,—will sleep till Jesus calls him?

I have four brothers and one sister dead. Two are lying in their little graves in South Carolina. I do not remember them. The rest are sleeping in Arkansas.

The first that died since I can remember was Alpheus, a wee little baby. He never knew any rest while he lived. He was born a cripple, and suffered till God took his soul to rest. One day we children came from school and found Mother kneeling by the bed, weeping. We did not know what she was crying about. We saw little Alpheus lying in the bed, looking so sweet and pure; but he looked very pale. We had never seen him look that way before, and Mother told us he was dead. He had died very suddenly. How sad we felt! We loved our little cripple brother dearly. Many were the times we had come into the room and found Alpheus

crying, because of the pain in his body. We always stole very quietly up to him and kissed his little pale forehead, and played with him awhile. He laughed at us so sweetly, and seemed to forget his pain. We thought him the sweetest baby of all. But this day when he looked so pale, he had ceased his crying and his little face looked happy. The beautiful angels had come and carried his soul to Heaven, and had left their passing glory on his face. On the following day,—a cold bleak day,—Alpheus' little body was laid in a cold grave. But Jesus knows him and takes care of him in Heaven, where we shall see him some happy day.

Years rolled by till John, the oldest boy in our home, was within a month of his eighteenth birthday. He was a strong young man in every way. It seems to me now that he was unusually kind on the evening before he took sick. He seemed to love us younger boys, and tried in every way to help us live pure lives. He was always happy and carried sunshine wherever he went.

When morning came and it was time to get up, Mother always called me first, because I was easily wakened; then I called John. On a hot July morning John rose from his bed, saying:

"Oh, how my head hurts!"

When I came back from feeding he had gone back to bed. He was very sick, and grew worse during the day. He soon passed into a state of delirium, only becoming conscious once before his death.

At this time he took into his arms his little sister, Hattie May, and kissed her tenderly, saying:

"She is so sweet, Mother!"

In his awful hours of delirium he said:

"I want to leave this world of sorrow and suffering."

He died calmly, raising his eyes toward Heaven, as if he saw God's angels coming to relieve him of his suffering. Oh, that triumphant look! It lifted our whole family toward God and Heaven. That one look of victory is the light that flashes from the gloom of his sickness and death, but that is an abiding comfort to us now and will be to our end on earth. In his death we caught a glimpse of Heaven, and some of us said in the anguish of our soul:

"Let us go with him."

He died on a Sabbath morning,—about eight o'clock,—in July, 1887. That was a sad day for us. There was no Sunday school nor preaching, only a funeral sermon in the afternoon by our pastor. On Monday afternoon we, with our kindred and friends, gathered around his grave, and while he lay so still in death, some one started that comforting song:

"There's a land that is fairer than day,  
And by faith we can see it afar;  
For the Father waits over the way,  
To prepare us a dwelling-place there.

In the sweet by-and-by,  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore."

While this was being sung, death seemed to lose its sting for us.

The baby of our large family was little Agnes. She had light hair and blue eyes. She was so sweet to us! She had the kindest, most unselfish disposition I have ever known in a child. We boys loved her dearly. Father was foolish about her. She would follow him for hours, or she would climb into his lap and sit there for hours, perfectly contented. One of her favorite occupations was to comb Father's hair, and he never tired of having her do this. She was the pet of the family. One Christmas, when she was about eight years old, we were expecting to have a great Christmas, but little Agnes took sick. Instead of the usual joy of Christmas there was deep anxiety in our home. So often we could hear her little weak voice saying:

"Mama, my head hurts, my head hurts!"

She suffered so intensely for so long, we knew she could not get well. It hurt Mother so much to see her suffer, that she prayed to God to take her so that she might be free from pain. And God took her. We missed her and wanted to keep her here, but we knew God knew what was best for us all.

Sadness will come some time into each of our lives, but we know all things work together for good to them that love God, and we know there will be no sorrow in Heaven, for the Bible says: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

## XIX

### CHRISTMAS TIME

WE were poor, and old Santa Claus did not bring us much at Christmas time, but we did enjoy what he did bring. We did not know who he was, but we did know that he had a long gray beard, and soft kind eyes, and drove fine reindeer, hitched to a great sled. We also knew that he came rattling down the chimney while we were asleep. We boys found the prints of his fingers on the rocks of our chimney. It was worn slick where he had climbed. We almost worshiped these finger-prints on the chimney. To us Santa Claus was the best man on earth. We thought it had to snow on Christmas so that he could drive his reindeer and ride in his sleigh. It was a great surprise to us when we observed that it did not always snow on Christmas. We knew he got there some way, and we began to wonder how.

On Christmas night we little boys went to bed early. We were told that if old Santa Claus found us awake he would not stop at our house. So we tried hard to go to sleep; but what a time we did have! We covered up, head and ears, and then stuck our fingers in our ears. We did not feel like



that was real sleep, but that had to pass for sleep for a long time. Once Julian and I dozed off to sleep and were wakened by the sound of some one talking. We thought sure it was Santa Claus, so we peeped out from under the cover, just as easy as we could, and saw Father and Mother and our older sister and brother, who professed to know all about Santa Claus, slyly nibbling on nuts and candy. Oh, how my mouth did water for just one little taste! But we knew that Santa Claus had come. They were getting the first "eat" at the goodies. We knew ours could not come till morning, so we went back to sleep.

Somehow, we all wakened early Christmas morning. Father did not have to call us. The first one who awoke cried out, "Christmas gift!" Then from all parts of the house came the cry, "Christmas gifts!" But that did not mean very much to us; what we wanted was to get to our stockings. We wanted to see what was in them. We found them nearly full. I pulled out two great, long sticks of candy, then a fine orange; while I was doing this, I ate one stick of candy. Away down toward the toes we found some pieces of fancy candy and some good nuts.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the boys. John had found a great big roasted potato in his stocking. Santa Claus was playing a joke on him!

About that time Will asked:

"What is this?"

It was a big fat horse made of dough. By the

time we could answer his question, he had devoured its tail, and soon the whole horse galloped down his throat. Some of us had dogs and cats and men, all nicely cut and baked in the oven. Strange, but these animals just went running to our mouths. Father and Mother looked happy, but a little sleepy, as they watched us enjoy these plain, simple Christmas sweets. Santa Claus had been good to us and we were never happier.

Just before breakfast, Father took down the old Bible and read about the birth of Jesus our Savior. Then we knelt, while Father prayed. He thanked God for the birth of Jesus, for Christianity and the happiness it brings, and for a happy home.

At breakfast we did not have any eggnog, as some people do. We never had anything like that on our table at any time, but I can tell you, we did have lots of good things to eat. Uh! uh! How we enjoyed them!

We would invite our friends to eat Christmas dinner with us. While the older ones sat around the fire and talked to Father, or helped Mother prepare the dinner, we boys shot firecrackers. We would scare the timid girls nearly to death with them. Such fun!

Once, I remember, we were out in the yard shooting firecrackers, and when I saw that Jim Smith was not looking toward me, I thought about something, and I had the funniest feeling. I felt just as full of something,—I guess it was mischief. I lighted a little firecracker, slipped up behind Jim,

and stuck it real close to his coat. I was sure he would jump about a foot high. The thought of it almost made me snicker out loud. Pop! it went. Jim sure jumped, but I did not laugh for the fire-cracker shot both ways and my thumb hurt, and Jim's coat had a hole in it. I laughed some, but I was hurting all the time on the inside.

Children, it does not take eggnog or whiskey to make us happy at Christmas time.

## XX

### EARLY LOVE AFFAIRS

How sweet is early love! At no age in life can one love more intensely than in childhood. If all of life was full of love so innocent and honest, there would be fewer baldheaded men and fewer drooping, despondent women. The world would be lighter and brighter, with more sunshine in the home.

When I was a child I was very affectionate. At the early age of eight I felt that I was falling desperately in love. There were sweet Alice and Rena. I could scarcely decide which was the fairer. And those black eyes of bare-footed Susie just set my hair straight, when we would meet in our gaze. *Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!* I felt my little heart go many times when she would drop the thimble—right easy—into my hand. I always liked to play “thimble.” She did not often give it to the other boys, and I did not often give it to the other girls,—just Susie got it mostly. I could see nothing but shoes, and long dresses, and curls and powder and an old ugly lover, to prevent us from being wedded. But this lover said: “Won’t you be mine?” And she said: “Yes” (She was much older than I) and

my Susie went away, and I was left a wee, lone lover.

But there was left for me little Dausie; so hope revived. Chance made Dausie and me near neighbors, and association made us close sweethearts. We cracked hickory-nuts around the same wintry fires; we ate apples,—sweet, mellow apples,—gathered from our orchard. Long winter nights we played “blind-fold” in the same big, warm log-house. We could but be sweethearts. I could see plainly in Dausie’s eyes that she loved me. She was a good girl, but very ugly. So I said to myself:

“Dausie is real good, and pure,—but ugly,—oh, very ugly! I really don’t want to marry her, but I guess I will.”

With a courageous face I braced myself up for the proposal; but my Dausie moved away first, and our love died.

I can not forget my blue-eyed Fannie. Her eyes were blue and her hair hung in curls about her shoulders, and she was our preacher’s daughter. She lived in town, but she came often to the farm to enjoy our country life. Sitting under the plum tree, eating plums, I said to her:

“How old are you?”

She raised her big blue eyes to mine and smiled one of her heavenly smiles right into my heart, and replied:

“I am eleven. How old are you?”

I choked and choked, but finally gasped:

“I am eleven, too.”

It almost makes me choke now as I think of it.

One day she nearly broke my heart by telling me she liked another boy. Fannie could just treat me any old way. I remember standing one day for ten minutes and letting her knock all the dust out of my cottonade pants and stripe my bare legs to the knees with a long, keen peach-tree switch. I just danced a graceful jig for my Fannie. It was all right. But she, too, gave her hand to another, and I was left alone with "an aching void" in my heart that this world could never fill.

Seventeen years had piled themselves upon me when I sat in a room with the fairest of my life near by. It was Agnes,—the loveliest among ten thousand. She spoke so sweetly when I was preparing to go home; she said:

"You had better stay all night. It is thundering and lightning, and oh, so dark outdoors!"

I felt that three hours of talk with her would guide me safely through the mile of darkness to my home. It seemed that her eyes would be lights, her face brightness, and her form a shield for me. On the way I must pass through a dark ravine,—a half-mile broad. Wild cats and occasionally panthers were seen there. When I came to this place, Agnes' eyes, face, and form all vanished, and wild cats seemed pursuing me all along the little path. The darkness was intense. The lightning flashed, and the thunder rolled above me. My feet went dashing through the woods, carrying my brave body with them. I was almost scared to death. I ran with my eyes turned toward the stormy clouds.

Suddenly my feet found nothing to stand on. I had tumbled into a ditch five feet deep. I felt as if a thousand wild cats and two or three panthers had tumbled in on me. With a four-legged run I dashed through a blackberry patch that was beyond, and struck the hill toward home like a thunderbolt. I reached home and crawled into bed, meekly, feeling as if I did not love anybody much 'cept Mama, and didn't know that I wanted to marry anybody.

Children, it took ten more years of just such experiences as these before I found the girl I really loved, and who loved me. Don't be in a hurry to get married.

## XXI

### MOTHER'S LOVE

I SOMETIMES think that some of us do not appreciate our mother as we should. When she is gone, then we feel deeply our loss and long for her leadership again; but then it is too late,—she is gone. We might have had her with us longer had we only lightened her burdens some. Perhaps we may do this yet and make life more pleasant for Mother.

Let us never be ashamed of Mother's hands because her fingers are long and bony, nor ashamed of her face because of the wrinkles. Perhaps some of them came while she was sitting up at night caring for you when you were sick. How sweet to kiss her wrinkled face!—we may not kiss it long, for death may soon claim our Mother. Let us never be ashamed of that dear form that is stooped now. She did that toiling for you and for me. We once reclined helplessly on Mother; let her, as she grows old, lean upon our strong arm, till we see her sweet life safe beyond death.

I have forgotten many things of my childhood, but one thing I never will forget: When a mere child, a prattling boy, I remember Mother's removing my dirty clothes worn during the day, clean-



ing my body, then putting on my clean white night-gown, and telling me to kneel down by her knee. She taught me to pray my first prayer. While her hand was gently resting on my head she had me repeat after her:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take."

Then, after I had grown older she taught me the Lord's Prayer, and when I had grown still older, she one night said:

"Freddie, you are old enough to pray by yourself; kneel and pray by your bedside."

And I did.

Children, don't you suppose I, a little child, found Jesus that night in my prayer? I think He was very near. At first I loved my Mother's Jesus, whom she seemed to love so much, then I loved Him because I felt that He loved me. Do your mothers take time to teach you to pray? I trust that they do.

Our Mother could not give us fine clothes to wear—she sat up late many nights and patched our clothes to help Father save money to pay for our farm. She could not give us delicacies to eat. Many, many afternoons, as the sun was sinking, we children frolicked in our play while we ate a piece of plain cold cornbread, cut nice and straight by Mother; that was our evening lunch. Mother's life and words led us to Jesus, who can give us beau-

tiful garments of righteousness and the true bread of life.

Who cares for us like Mother when we are sick or suffering? I have been sick away from home, and how I longed for the gentle touch of Mother's hand on my aching brow. It always seemed to soothe so! She knew me and knew just what I wanted.

Once when I was away from home attending school an awful boil came on my foot. My whole limb was racked with pain; I could not sleep. Friends were nursing me, but they did not know how, —some way,—to ease the pain. They did all they could.

I lay one night and cried and longed for Mother to come to me. The night passed, and I suffered till noon the next day, when I heard voices outside my room, and in a moment my Mother and Father stepped into my presence. Mother was, in a minute, kneeling beside me and gently rubbing my foot. With one touch, the pain seemed to leave. Soon a healing poultice had been placed on my foot, and I could not say that I was suffering. I then felt that an angel could not touch more softly than Mother. I wept for joy, and said:

"Mother, I am so glad you came."

Who is more solicitous about us than Mother? When one of us was out too long, it was Mother who first began to grow uneasy. She did not sleep till she heard our footstep. And she knew whose step it was as soon as it sounded on the front porch.

When I used to go courting I had two failings: I went too often, and stayed too late. As I sat in my sweetheart's presence, she talked so sweetly and smiled so entrancingly that night often hung curtains on either side of me, nearly equally, before I hung on the door and smiled a loving "Good night." But as I hurried home, I was always troubled with the thought: Mother will say, "Freddie, you stayed too late to-night."

One night I said: "I will slip in to-night and Mother will not hear me." I often said this. I opened the gate easily, and shut it just so. I tiptoed onto the front porch, pulled off my shoes, took them in my hands, to pass through Mother's room to mine upstairs. I quietly opened the front door and tiptoed on through the darkness, scarcely breathing.

*Bump! Bang! Bang!* I had tumbled over a chair, and while I was rubbing my aching shin, I heard Mother's gentle voice saying:

"Freddie, is that you?"

She seemed already to know, but I said meekly:

"Yes'm."

"You are mighty late, my boy," she returned.

I went upstairs, continuing to rub my shin. It seemed as if I always bumped something and Mother always had her ear there to hear.

Children, are we wandering out in the darkness of sin? It is Mother that listens long and waits anxiously for our return. Will we break Mother's heart and send her weeping to her grave? She is not happy, because we do not return to God.

## XXII

### A FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

WHEN I was a boy, one fourth of July my Father said that Julian, Will, and I might go to Van Buren, Arkansas, to a great fourth of July picnic. We lived fifteen miles from Van Buren, so we made the trip to town on the night before the fourth. The excitement of going, the riding on the train, and the change of scene, kept us from sleeping that night.

The picnic day was to us long and hot. That night we watched a grand display of fireworks until late, and when we went to the depot to take the train to return home, we were tired and very sleepy. On inquiring, we learned that the train was six hours late, so we could not start before morning. It seemed we were to have another sleepless night.

There was a great crowd at the depot waiting for the train, and among this crowd were several mischievous boys, who took great delight in seeing that no one had the opportunity to go to sleep. Those who dozed wakened soon, with an impression that something awful had happened.

Will, my brother, felt that he just must have sleep, so he lay down on the depot floor. These mischievous boys woke him. He tried to sleep again, with

## FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION 85

the same result. The third time he was aroused he left the room half asleep and walked out onto the platform. A freight train was passing as he came out. He thought, evidently, of taking this train, for he walked up near it, and passed on.

Near the break of day some one said to me:

"Will is not here, and cannot be found."

I went to search for him, but nowhere could I find him. His condition when last seen was reported to us, and we knew then that he was asleep when he left. He had been gone about two hours, wandering in the darkness. We brothers called loudly, but only silence answered us. Tears were rolling down our cheeks.

Rumor that a child was lost passed through the great crowd, and a silence like the silence of death fell upon all. Many came to make inquiries of us and sympathize with us, and even those who were strangers were going in every direction, seeking the lost boy. Our agony seemed to seize the whole crowd, our sufferings were theirs. The station was on the bank of the Arkansas River; and to our horror of Will's being lost was added the horror of his having fallen into the river.

"He has been drowned!" was the word passed through the crowd. Many faces were pale as death. Just as the day was breaking a stranger told us he had seen a boy lying between the tracks on the railroad roundhouse yard,—asleep. Engines passed over these tracks every few minutes. "He has been cut to pieces by an engine," flashed into our minds.

Between the two thoughts,—drowned and cut to pieces by an engine,—painful anxiety came upon not only us but the whole crowd. Wild excitement prevailed everywhere. Just then we heard our train whistle. I decided that I must stay and continue the search for my brother's body, I could not think of doing otherwise. Julian must go home and bear the sad message: "Will is dead."

As the train came in I rushed down across the railroad yard, around behind a building on the banks of the river, and just ahead of me I saw my missing brother. He was dirty, and apparently sound asleep. He was walking slowly along the banks of the river. I ran to him and cried:

"Will, yonder is your train!"

He awoke, and,—well, he looked like a black streak as he bounded for his train. When the crowd saw him coming, "The lost boy is found!" went up in a shout. Rev. Robert O'Kelley, who helped us in the search, held the train till we got there. A king's son could not have been more royally received. As we ascended the steps, the sun looked over the eastern hills upon a happy crowd. Even strangers vied with our friends in showing their great joy over the fact that the lost boy was found.

The world is full of people like these,—brimming over with kindness and sympathy. Who would not be willing to spend his life searching for those who are lost in sin? As a shout of joy went up when my brother was found, so a far greater re-

## FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION 87

joicing is heard in Heaven when a lost soul is found and is brought back to God.

Children, are you lost now? Then let Heaven ring with gladness, because the lost is found.

## XXIII

### SWIMMING AND PLAYING BALL ON SUNDAY

THE farm is a good place to rear boys,—and girls, too. There is less opportunity for temptation there than in the city or town. The farm is in freedom's air. The sky is clear, no smoke of the city clouds it. The stars travel their courses in plain view.

We children often stood at night and tried to count the stars, wondered where the Milky Way was,—hunted Job's Coffin,—counted the Seven Stars,—watched the Great Dipper as it apparently swung around the North Star,—and asked ourselves the question: "Who made all these?"

We watched the sun rise,—clear and red,—and watched it set, throwing its golden hues up against the following darkness. We watched the moon come up,—sometimes rising in the darkness and fading in the sun's brilliant light, and sometimes rising in the rays of the sunlight and setting amid the shades of night.

"Why dost thou change, beautiful moon?" we would ask.

But no answer would come from the moon and we would wonder and wonder and wonder.



There was a clear, running stream of water on our farm. How inspiring to watch the water run, and how we did love to play in it!

One Sunday we had company. While Father and Mother entertained their company in the afternoon, we children slipped off, went down to this stream of water, rolled up our trousers, and waded in. We ducked and dived and tried to swim, till night came and our company had gone. We knew it would not do for Father to find out what we had been doing, so we older boys persuaded the younger ones not to tell. But Fleming was along, and he was small and a great hand to talk. Evidently his conscience was hurting him. Perhaps he feared punishment and thought he would escape by telling on us.

After we boys had fed the stock and had come to the house, and all were gathered in the big room of our log-house, Fleming crawled up on Father's knee and began to talk. He was revealing the whole secret of our afternoon's play. John got where Father could not see him and shook his fist at Fleming. Julian threw himself on the trundle-bed and stopped up his ears, but Fleming went on with his story. We twisted and frowned, even turned pale, but the story was all told.

Father said nothing.

Monday's noon found us boys sitting around the dinner-table. We had many stripes on our backs, and a good, long, fatherly lecture stored away in our little memory. We had lost many tears and many

squalls and made many promises not to do so again, —and we never did.

We did something fully as bad, though. One Sunday Father had gone to keep his appointment to preach, and we boys, with some neighbor boys, slipped off from Mother and played ball all afternoon. We came in at night, feeling just as mean as boys could feel. Father came home just as we were eating our Sunday evening's meal. While we were at the table, Father said:

"May Ann, as I came by Milo Randall's place I saw some grown men, some of them members of the church, playing base-ball on Sunday. If I should catch our boys playing base-ball on Sunday, I ain't here if I wouldn't skin them alive."

Father looked just as if he meant it. If he had looked at us closely, he would have seen some pale boys. We trembled to the very bottom of our boots. We made no remarks on the subject, but after that we kept the Sabbath.

Children, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

## XXIV

### JIM GLENN'S INDIAN STORY

JIM GLENN was a man who lived in our neighborhood when I was a boy. He was a happy man; wherever he went sunshine seemed to follow. The despondent person brightened when he came near; the sick smiled when he looked down on them; and those in health just had to hold their sides when he told his odd jokes.

Jim was tall and rawboned, and walked a "happy-go-easy" walk. He was a typical mountaineer of Arkansas, a native of Madison County. He was not educated, but he was a true Christian, a member of the Baptist Church. Some of his closest friends were Methodists. He was as honest as the days are long. He wore a broad smile on his face, which occasionally broke into a hearty laugh, and when he laughed every one laughed.

It was while we were sitting around the supper-table in the hot month of August that we saw the rawboned face of Jim Glenn peering in through our kitchen door. We invited him in and seated him on one of our best plain chairs. He was in a fine humor for talking. We brought out some of our best Arkansas watermelons and cut them. While he dug

up the luscious red meat with his long pocket-knife, and poked it into his big mouth, he told us of one of his exciting experiences. I give it to you as he told it to us, as nearly as possible.

His face assumed a serious look as he began:

"I was in the cattle business just after the war,—myself and another man. We had gathered up a pretty good bunch of cattle, and wanted to take them to market. We took, as a route, the way through the Indian Territory. This country was then inhabited by many wild Indians, but we thought we could make it through all right. We started on our way up the valley towards Kansas. We got along fine till we got near the Kansas State line. One evening after we had climbed a long hill, we saw just ahead of us a party of wild Indians, climbing up from the other side. Mischief was clearly seen pictured on their hideous countenances. When they saw us, with a fiendish yell they made for us. We were not able to resist, so in a few minutes we were in their hands. We expected to be killed quickly, but they were not ready then, evidently, for, after consultation they dispatched several of their party to make us secure prisoners. We supposed that they had set to-morrow for our time to be killed, as it was then dusk. They took us and tied ropes around us, fastening our arms securely to our bodies, so we could not get loose, as they thought. Our legs also were tied together hard and tight. We were then securely bound to a tree. It looked as if they intended to burn us. Our doom seemed

settled. The Indians left us in the dark and built a fire and cooked and ate their supper. After supper they gathered around the fire and took a good long smoke. Oh, how hideous their dusky forms looked in the flickering light of their camp-fire! Every once in a while they turned their keen eyes toward us. We evidently were the subject of their conversation. As the night wore on, they got sleepy, and placing their blankets on the ground around their fire, they lay down. They were soon sound asleep.

"The thought then came to my mind: 'Can we not manage to get away?' I began to think. Toward midnight their fire burned low,—just a little flickering light broke the darkness now and then. The Indians were sleeping soundly. I began to work my fingers on one hand. I soon worked them loose. I remembered having a knife, an old barlow, in my pocket. I managed, as my hand was near this pocket, to get my knife. I finally succeeded in cutting the rope that bound my hand. Then, of course, I was soon loose. I stole quietly to my companion and cut the ropes that bound him, and we were soon free and hidden in the darkness of the night. We gladly left our horses and cattle with the Indians."

With one of his happy smiles Jim Glenn added:

"And I can tell you, boys, we felt like saying 'thank you' to God when we got far enough away from those Indians."

By this time Jim's melon was gone, and we boys had big, blinking eyes gazing at him, and some heads with hair standing almost straight up.

Children, God takes care of us in times of danger.

## XXV

### UNCLE MILO

MR. MILO RANDALL was living in our neighborhood when we moved there. He had come to Arkansas from the State of New York. He was above the average man's height, was large, and very stout. He had a rough, iron-like face, bushy hair, and large ears. But his most noticeable feature was his very big mouth; and from it often came a laugh that would make a sick man shake his sides. He was also a very fluent speaker. His roaring voice and his big fists,—hardened by exposure to many summers' suns and by contact with many an old rough plow-handle,—coming down on the table, made his remarks almost irresistible. He knew no logic, but his ready flow of language and quick wit were a substitute for what the judges in our country debating society often called unanswerable argument, and we school-boys were defeated by him many times.

When the world, or Uncle Milo's wife, did not act to suit him, his sonorous voice,—a twin to the lesser thunders,—was set to work to make them suit. The neighbors a half-mile away did not need to go nearer to listen to his reasoning, while he sat at the

breakfast table. They heard peculiar accompaniments to the rustle of the early morning breezes that were puffing the scent of spring blossoms into their nostrils.

There was more courage in Uncle Milo's voice than in his heart. He was a coward. Once he quarreled a long time with a neighbor, who suddenly slapped him hard. Uncle Milo did not turn his other cheek, nor slap his neighbor back, but opened his large mouth in a pitiful bawl,—and he bawled and he bawled.

When night accompanied him on a journey, Uncle Milo always carried a club and a lantern. Once a mischievous boy placed a jack-o'-lantern, in the shape of a big cow's head, in his path. The seeing of it dotted a quick period in his walk and brought forth a loud command to move aside; seeing that the old cow's eyes just calmly blinked at him, he dashed his lantern at it with all his might, and turned and ran pellmell for his home and his poor tongue-tied wife, Jane.

Uncle Milo was a man who borrowed often from his neighbors, but a direct question, asking for the thing he wanted to borrow, was never known to come from him. He had a way of circling around and leading up to his request, somewhat as follows:

"Good morning, Mr. Lark. Are you well this morning?"

Father looked up to see his big bushy head poked through the shop door.

"Yes, I believe so. Are you all well?"



"Yes, yes," said Uncle Milo, as he scraped the ground, bowing. "Fine morning for work," he continued. "I am very much behind with my farm work. Seems that everything goes against me."

"I am sorry," said Father.

"My corn needs plowing over again. There is a great deal of grass in it, but it must wait. I haven't my cotton chopped to a stand yet, but that must wait for a day or so, too. My wheat looks fine, but I planted last fall in new ground, and a great many sprouts have come up in it. I tell you, Mr. Lark, my back is very weak now. I believe I will apply for a pension. It seems like I never will get over my hurt I received while in the Union Army. I am not much account." Father beat away on a plow point, sharpening it, and responded every now and then to him. "I say, I can not do much work, such as sprouting and chopping cotton. I can plow very well. I have been digging up some sprouts. They must be gotten out of my wheat, for they will soon begin to shade it. I want to make a good crop of wheat. I do believe my son John is one of the most careless boys I ever saw."

"That is the way with boys," said Father.

"I can't keep any tools on the place, hardly at all. Now last spring I bought two good grubbing hoes, and John has misplaced one of them, and yesterday while I had him sprouting, he struck a rock and broke the end off the other one."

"That is bad," Father remarked.

"I do wish I had a grubbing hoe just to-day. I could get through in one day."

"Why, Mr. Randall, you may have mine. There it is hanging there."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" And he scraped and pawed the ground again, bowing. A minute later he was twisting off up through the orchard, with our hoe on his shoulder.

Uncle Milo was a good man, but his life's sun set behind a cloud, for he was not a Christian.

## XXVI

### JACOB

JACOB was a mule we had on our farm. He was a long, slick mule, with a gray nose, a very peaceful-looking eye, and great long ears, which, when not in use, fell about his head, giving him the best possible appearance of innocence. When Jacob was first brought to our farm,—a two-year-old mule,—we thought he was a fine mule because he looked so good and gentle, but he soon began to display some wonderful traits.

By way of introduction to us he jumped out of our stable, through a little side door about two by four feet, jumped over a twelve-railed, staked, and rided fence, and left us with the pleasure of hunting him on our hands. This was Jacob's first performance.

From the very first we paid due regard to his heels. He was a proficient kicker. We thought his heels were full of lightning and thunder, and being too close often meant a great shock.

Jacob did not seem to like plowing at all. His angelic look soon departed when he was hitched to a plow, and woe be unto the boy that had to trot after him. The happiness of Julian and myself for one whole spring was sacrificed for this work. We

took week about, pacing after him. We never learned just how strong Jacob was, for we did not have plows on the farm that could test him. When he pulled a plow against a stump either the stump or plow had to break, or, at least, it did, unless his harness snapped. It did not matter how tired he appeared when we quit work on Saturday evening, he always had his trotting clothes on Monday morning when we hitched him to a plow. He would trot up and down the row a whole half-day at a time,—that is, when we were not fixing the harness or plow.

We were warned when we bought him to beware of his back, and we did. But as we continued working Jacob, he seemed to grow sweeter in disposition. When we had worked him all day and felt very tired, the temptation was strong to ride him home. There was no sign of bucking displayed by him. Father one day said:

“Boys, I am going to ride Jacob.”

Poor Father should have said, “I am going to try to ride him,” but he did not say that. When we took Jacob out at noons and nights we rubbed his back gently. Sometimes we ventured to lean up against him, and finally we began to breast him. This seemed to be the joy of Jacob’s life. At last Father decided that all was ready for the ride.

So, one morning, Father said:

“Boys, I will plow Jacob this morning and ride him home at noon.” He should have said, “I will try to ride him home,” but he did not say that. He

worked Jacob very hard, and when the farm dinner-bell sounded Father took off the harness, and got on his bare back to ride him! I am not sure, but it seems to me that Father had a loving smile playing on his face, as much as to say, "Boys, watch your father ride him."

Jacob started,—started off like a thirty-year-old mule, but in a moment his whole appearance changed. His ears ceased their flopping, and pointed straight toward Heaven, betokening an abundance of bucking. He seemed to have the power to draw his left eye forward and his right eye backward toward his tail. His jaws looked twisted and his whole head seemed to be catacorned. His tail was elevated above the plain of his back. We boys thought he would have made a good mule for the devil to ride, if he had not looked quite so mean.

For a moment we saw Father sitting between Jacob's head and tail as they buzzed up and down through the air, then we saw him disappearing into the air. We did not know but that Father had seen "Jacob's ladder" and was going to be with the angels; but in a moment he started backward toward the earth, and when he landed it was all he could do to keep from standing on his bald head. The nice, soft, plowed ground dealt very gently with Father, for it suffered some holes to be made in it by his hands, head, and knees.

This seemed to hurt Father's pride. "*I will* ride him," he said, when he should have said, "*I will*

try to ride him." But he did not say that. So we led Jacob back to Father, and the mule went through a like performance. Father did not ride him, but he said:

"I'll get John Ford to ride him at noon [John was a professional mule sticker] and then I'll ride him at night."

When he went to work, he took a saddle along to use that night. The afternoon soon passed, and when the night shadows settled down around Father he mounted Jacob again. It was in dismay that we boys looked up and saw his white shirt boring a hole through the night shades. Poor Father! We knew that he must hit the earth hard again,—and he did.

After all of this, Jacob continued to look just as good and pure and innocent as ever. He bucked off two or three of us boys, and Father concluded he did not want Jacob and sold him to a man that wanted just such a mule. Poor Jacob finally met his match,—and more. He bucked up against a railroad engine and was compelled to depart this life to go where all bad mules go. He died a miserable death.

Children, does looking good make us good? Remember the history of this bad mule, and how he died. The life of bad people on earth is cruel, rough, and miserable, and their end is darkness and death eternal. Let us live the life of the good and have their end of heavenly joy.

## XXVII

### LIVE RIGHT AND DIE RIGHT

CHILDREN, if we live right we will die right. I hope none of you will put off preparing for death till you think you are going to die. That is a poor time to make preparation for death. More than that, we ought to be ashamed to present Jesus a life that has been spent mostly in the service of the devil. Jesus needs a pure, whole life, or His cause needs it. Give your young, tender hearts to Him and let Him make a man or woman of you. How happy will be your life and how sweetly you will die, if you will but take Jesus along with you!

Old Mr. Campbell lived a long while in our neighborhood. He had once been a Christian, but had backslidden, and we knew him as a very wicked, bad man. He did not show any signs of fear of death till some great danger seemed to be approaching. When he saw signs of an approaching storm, then he began to read his Bible and to become very religious. He was good then,—indeed. But when all danger was past, he soon forgot his good promises and became the same swearing Mr. Campbell.

Once, in May, we had a severe storm. The cloud gathered quickly and rushed upon us from the south-

west, with a mighty whirl and roar. A crash, falling, a mighty puff of wind, a great dash of rain, and the storm went on its journey northwest, leaving a clear sky, with a May-day's sun sending its rays down on sparkling grass and the trees of our mountain country. In the beauty of that afternoon I went out and passed by the little log house of Mr. Campbell. I saw him in front of his house, eagerly reading his Bible. The storm had scared him. He did not have time to read his Bible before the storm came, and consequently, he must read it afterward.

In the dark stormy time of his death do you think, children, the sunshine of God's love was beaming upon him? I do not know, but I will tell you how he died.

He moved from our community, and shortly afterward the news came that Mr. Campbell was dead. The report was given by friends, who were present, that he died cursing and swearing; a dark, dark cloud was seemingly around him. Do you want to die as he died? I do not.

My brother-in-law, Manning Cowart, told me that he knew an old man in Florida who was very wicked. He had never prayed, and did not know how to pray. A terrible cyclone struck his house. There were two large rooms in this house, with a hall between. You have seen a house like this, haven't you? Well, as the cyclone came toward him, this poor, gray-haired old man started to run from one room to another, when the wind caught him and lifted him off the floor and pressed him tightly



up high against the wall. The poor old man thought surely he was killed and he knew he was not ready to die, so he began to pray:

"O Lord, have mercy on Jesus Christ! O Lord, have mercy on Jesus Christ!"

Evidently, he did not know how to pray, did he? I wonder if God would answer a prayer like that? I will not tell you whether he was killed or not. I will leave the poor old gray-haired man pinned up there against the wall, and let his trembling old lips, from behind his white, flowing beard, open meekly and say:

"Children, do not wait for a cyclone to make preparation for death."

## XXVIII

### MR. V.'S FAMILY

THE discipline required in a good Christian home often seems severe to the children in the home, but it is absolutely necessary. There is not one child out of a hundred who will complain because of his parents doing this, after he has grown to manhood. Yet I hear parents say, "Oh, I cannot punish my child; it seems so cruel." I feel that the most cruel thing a parent can do is to let his child grow up without punishment and Christian discipline.

Mr. V., who was a good farmer, was one of our neighbors. He raised plenty for his large family. They never knew want while we knew them. He had a comfortable house in which to live, a fine orchard near by, where one could get the finest Arkansas apples, peaches, pears, and plums. He raised his own wheat and corn, and in the fall put away enough meat and lard for a year. He always dressed his family comfortably.

But Mr. V. was a hard worker and expected each of his children to be the same. During the week he made his family work very hard. They must always be present at work time, but when Saturday night came he dismissed them. They could go any-

where and could do what they pleased during Sunday, just so they were back ready for work Monday morning. This was his one rule in family government. The mother of the children did not care if her boys drank or if her girls danced.

"Let them have a good time while they are young," she would say.

Mr. V.'s children were smart and very entertaining. They were prominent in social life. But what did this count for? On the Sabbath the boys were seldom found in Sunday school. Their Sundays were spent in running around with some bad boys. Very early they learned to drink and gamble. Their lives were vile. They cared nothing for day school, and did not love books. Mr. V. had no library for them. They knew no Bible and no prayers. The boys' lives were a failure. They were not happy. They became useless citizens. Truly it might be said: "Mr. V.'s children were better never born, for their journey in life was in the shadows, and their life's end seemed to be in darkness."

The girls in this home danced. They were made, thereby, to associate with the very vilest young men in our community. Christ seemed to flee from them and virtue trembled in their presence. Many a cold night these daughters danced till near the break of day, and then went from a warm room into the cold night air. Sometimes in the hot days of July and August they danced all day long,—danced, and while extremely hot, ate ice cream and drank iced lemonade. One of the girls,—that father and

mother's own child,—soon contracted consumption. Down, down, down she went until, one cold night in February, her spirit was called into eternity. If she could have spoken back she would have said:

"Mother, Father, the dance did it; you said it was no harm, but it killed your poor child."

This kind of association resulted in unhappy marriages. The girls married worthless young men, and Mr. V. practically supported his own son-in-law. He expressed the truth well when he said:

"The devil holds a grudge against me, and is paying me back in worthless sons-in-law."

In his old age he was left broken in fortune, but, we trust, a wiser man.

Fathers, mothers, your children raise their hands pleadingly to you, and cry:

"Please control us. Punish us severely, if necessary. Care for us little ones, cultivate our love. Oh, the enticing world wants us! And hell wants us! Rear us for God. We may not think it best now, but from the judgment we will bless you through eternity."

Children, tell papa and mama about Mr. V. and his family.

## XXIX

### MR. L.'S FAMILY

IT is beautiful to see the affection of some children for their parents. Everybody recognizes and appreciates the love and affection of the child for the parent. It is a God-given instinct, I suppose, but so often it dies in the heart of the child, for the reason that it is not cultivated. Sometimes it is the fault of the parents, because they do not act in such a way as to merit the child's true affection.

When I was a child Mr. L.'s family lived near us. There were in the family the father and mother and two daughters. Mr. L. was a practical farmer and a good citizen of the highest type. He was a Christian man. When the Sunday school began on Sunday morning he and his family were there. I was a member of his Sunday-school class; every member of his class loved him dearly. We knew that he prayed for us, and we knew that he studied for us, too, because he always had something good and interesting to tell us.

Mr. L.'s family were intelligent people, well informed, and far above the average in an educational way. The daughters were leaders in our little community social life. Everybody loved Ella and Lee.

The young man who was privileged to have the company of either of these girls felt that he was fortunate; and there was not a parent in all the country who was not glad to have his son in company with them. They were, also, leaders in church work; active but modest, admirable girls.

Mr. L. took sick. He was sick a long time. His disease grew to be chronic, and he became an invalid. He was helpless. His daughters gave up their social life, and day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, they tenderly cared for their father. For almost ten years they watched over him constantly, and not one murmur ever escaped their lips. When he died they kissed their long-suffering father and laid him away to rest. Their long, anxious watch was over.

They soon took their places again in social life. A few months passed and their mother took sick, and she became an invalid, also. She had dropsy and was very large and heavy. Her mind was weak, and she was as helpless as any child.

Again these girls sacrificed all their personal pleasures,—this time to care for their mother. So much sickness made it very hard for them to get food to eat and clothes to wear; so one of them would go out and work in the daytime while the other one stayed by the sick mother. Often at night, both of them were up, lifting "Mother" from the bed to a chair and doing anything they could to make her comfortable so that she might rest. When they slept, just one word from her, and they were up,

bending over her, asking: "What is it, Mother?"

During this period of the history of the family, a young widower asked one of these girls to marry him and have a home of her own. She answered him: "No." Had all of her answer been given, it would probably have been something like this: "I must stay and care for my helpless mother. I will sacrifice everything for her, and I will not leave my sister, for she needs me."

These unselfish lives were more beautiful to me because their care did not end in a few weeks or months, but it continued for years. The blush of maidenhood faded from the cheeks of Ella and Lee, their eyes lost their youth's happy sparkle, and the grim old world said: "Two old maids."

The care of the mother increased as the years passed. Her body grew larger and her mind weaker, but no murmur or complaint came from these girls. They cherished every babyish thought that came from their mother's lips, sometimes repeating them over and over to the friends and neighbors, who came in to see them.

After almost twenty years of watching, God took the mother. She found her rest in death. People said:

"Ella and Lee will be relieved."

But for such a long time they just seemed lost without "Mother," and their grief was heart-breaking. It was pitiable to see how lonely they were.

After Mother L. was gone, these sisters lived in their little log-house alone and struggled for a liv-

ing, until one day a rich man came and took Ella to his beautiful home to be his wife. He was a good Christian, and, I guess, worthy of this one who still lives an unselfish life in their home. Lee lives in the same little log-house; with her lives an old Aunt, who is the recipient of the many kindnesses that unconsciously come from a life such as Lee's has been.

Children, love your parents. Obey them while you are young, and when you grow older you will love them enough to sacrifice for them if it is necessary. Love is divine, and God will give a crown of glory to all who have it in their hearts.



## XXX

### HUNTING BEE-TREES

HUNTING bee-trees was a great pleasure to the people in our community when we first came there. Several of the men hunted bee-trees often, and Father went with them. Once they hunted a whole day and found nothing but a bell,—an old cow-bell.

Father had given us boys orders not to allow any stock to get inside our fence, and we meant to carry his orders out bravely. So, late that evening of the day Father found the bell, we heard the rattle of a cow-bell down behind a thicket. We younger boys heard, while wiggling around, our older brother's careful orders, how we were to act in the cow-chase. We were all excited, and John's voice keenly rang out:

"Here, Nero! Here, Nero! Here! Sic! ' Sic!"

Away we all went, yelling, laughing, jumping,—boys, dog, and all. We dashed up toward the thicket, ready to charge upon the cow. We went nearly wild when the cow seemed to run from behind the thicket at a breakneck speed. We knew a good chase was in store for us. We ran around behind the bushes, and charged upon the cow, but—what! There we saw Father's white shirt, bucking

up and down like a cow, and Father's head sticking out from it, with his neck encircled by a bell-cord, holding a bell. His fatherly face showed amusement all over. If it had not been Father, I guess we should have chased him away. As it was, he had nothing to do but laugh at us. But the time came when the laugh was turned on him.

He went bee-hunting another day, and came back a little after noon, reporting that he had surely found a bee-tree. It must be cut down that very afternoon, he said. So, our sister Janie came over to where we boys were chopping cotton, and told us what Father had found and that we might quit work and go with him.

We went wild. Every boy sent forth a mighty yell. Every hoe went down, and we rolled over in the dirt, turned somersaults, whooped wildly for a few minutes, and then struck for home as fast as boys could run.

Everything was soon ready. The mules were hitched to the wagon. The wagon was filled with buckets, dishpans,—in fact, with nearly everything on the place that would hold honey. We children were packed in the crevices, and Father, Mother and our laughing preacher, Brother Wood, occupied the higher seats. Away we went, twisting around, down a great bluff to the great bee-tree. We were quickly unloaded.

*Chop! chop! chop* went the axe; *crash!* went the tall tree. Father stood ready to take out the honey. So when the tree fell he made bravely for the home

of the bees. Our eyes stuck out like those of a dying calf, while Father advanced on the bees. We expected a great stinging, but Father took on a funny look, exhibiting a ridiculous face. A sickly grin flowed out from Father's mouth, as he said:

"There are no bees here."

The bees had gone. We children did not look as if we felt well, either; our whole family felt very pitiful. But I do not remember ever seeing a man open his mouth wider than Brother Wood did, laughing at Father. He seemed to think it a great deal funnier than we children did. But Father paid him all his "quarterage" that year, just the same.

His honey was very bitter that evening, but it kept getting sweeter and sweeter as time elapsed, till now it sweetens up a laugh every time our family circle talks about it.

He who fools may be fooled; it is easier to fool than to take fooling. The "bell-cow" man may become the empty bee-tree cutter.

## XXXI

### HOEING CANE

Boys sometimes get what is called "lazy." This is not a fatal disease. Usually the application of a little hickory-oil to one's legs and back almost entirely relieves him. I have never known one to die of this disease. My father was a splendid doctor for it.

Some kinds of work seem to be worse than others for bringing on these attacks of laziness. Then they are more likely to come at certain times of the year than at other seasons.

Hoeing cane is one of the worst kinds of work I ever did to bring on these attacks, especially as this job comes toward the end of June, just the time of year when one is most liable to an attack. I remember one morning, the last of June, while hoeing a patch of sorghum cane we boys suffered an attack of laziness that might have proved fatal had we not got relief.

We had been at work several days and had become wearied with the job itself. We were, this morning, working at the foot of a rocky hillside, and could see no end to our job. The day began hot and sultry. The weather was rainy, thus making

the heat harder to endure. The cane was partly hidden from the house, where we knew Father was.

The boys had all slowly filed out to the cane patch, hoe in hand, while the sun was just crowning our eastern hills with his glory. The dew was dripping from the untrimmed cane, which was about two feet high. Our bare feet and the lower part of our pants were wet with the dew. Soon the sun began to dry this and it had a very depressing effect upon our little legs.

The sun rose higher, and soon the sultry heat from the ground began to besiege our bodies. We felt the attack coming on. The warm sun had started the redheads (this is a farm bird) to singing and pecking on old trees and snags. This music always put lazy feelings into a boy. This awful ailment gripped us. Did you ever see it work, children? It works something as follows:

We were first attacked with a violent thirst. We must go after water every ten or fifteen minutes. This continued during the whole spell. Soon we began to watch the birds playing about us and the clouds that were beginning to gather in the horizon and sail across the hot-looking sky. We could not stand on both feet very well,—at least, one leg was rather bent in. A weak feeling came into our backs, and a support was necessary. We used our hoes freely for this. We placed the upper part of the handle across one of our shoulders, letting the end rest in our mouth. We threw one foot across the lower part, or twisted it around it some way, thus

making a kind of support. This gave some relief. Every now and then we would strike at a stalk of cane, but we did not hurt many of them. Our tongues were very loose. This is a peculiar thing about this terrible disease: it is no trouble to talk. Every boy tried to talk at once, and a violent laugh would now and then break forth.

We were almost "goners" then,—not much hope for us,—but Julian's keen eye (he was always first to sight such dangers) looked over toward the house, and he said:

"Boys, look yander, there is Pa!"

We looked and saw Father's white shirt shining up on top of a high stump. He was taking in his patch of lazy boys. He then climbed down, and we thought he had gone back to the house; but Julian suddenly exclaimed:

"Boys, he is coming!"

This struck terror to our hearts. Slowly Father advanced toward us. His hands were behind him. We knew what this meant,—a switch was there. The cane-stalks were flying in every direction then, not a lazy bone was in us. When Father was within about twenty yards of us we boys all turned and saluted him with a terrible squall. Every boy squalled just as loud as he could.

Then the operation began.

*Swap! Swap!* went Father's switch. Then he stopped and talked gently to us for a while.

*Swap! Swap! Swap!* Sounding above all this was the squalling of us afflicted boys.

*Swap! Swap! Swap!* It was Fleming's time now. He bent his legs just as far as he could from the switch, in order to make his pants loose, then he lay down on the ground and wallowed just like a little dog. He tumbled, and kicked, and pawed, and scratched, but Father always managed to hit him.

The noise of this fray finally ceased. It was all done. Smartness tingled in every limb. It was so nice to hoe cane. I never enjoyed work more in my life. It began to thunder, the lightning played across the beclouded sky, the rain began to fall, but we worked on. We were hungry, and the dinner-bell rang; but nothing seemed better to us just then than hoeing cane. We finally quit, and a string of tear-stained eyes looked across the dinner-table, and some poor streaked backs pointed in the opposite direction. We did not look at Father much. His look hurt our little feelings. But smartness sat deep upon our brows, and it sat there a long, long, time.

Father loved to quote: "Spare the rod and spoil the child." We boys were never spoiled that way. We thank Father for this now.

## XXXII

### WORKING TO KEEP FROM WORKING

GOOD hard work on a farm does give one such an appetite,—especially a boy!

Our farm dinner-bell usually rang at half-past eleven o'clock, and old Jenny, one of the mules, would begin to bray with the first clap of the bell. Every boy in the field joined in the chorus, with a mighty yell. Down went our hoes. We would bury them deep in the ground to keep the sun from them, and to have something to hinder us from going directly to chopping cotton when we returned after dinner. Then we would somersault ourselves to the house.

How we did eat! That is, if we had been smart and worked well that morning. Father often asked John, our oldest brother, how we little fellows had worked. Sometimes I would lose my appetite completely when this question was asked; and it was not an uncommon thing to see Julian raise his shoulders clear up over his ears to stop them, so he could not hear. Frequently some boy must excuse himself from the table at the very beginning of this question.

I remember a neighbor of ours laughed at Julian



and me once, when we were going to pick up corn-stalks. It was early one cool morning. Our feet were bare and torn with briars. Our pants reached about half-way between our knees and our ankles. We wore no coats, but we wore a very despondent look. We stuck our hands into our trouser-pockets just as deep as we could get them. We walked very slowly, with our heads bowed reverently. Our feelings were very much troubled.

When we reached the place, the sun burned down on our little straw hats so hot and the redheads sang so "lazy like," that we just could not work. Our feelings still hurt. We got thirsty, and we went to the spring to get some good cool water. When we got there we could not drink much, but we stayed a good while anyway,—stayed till we saw Father's black hat bobbing up over the hill. This was a signal for quick action. My, but we flew! Two smarter boys could not be found. The corn-stalks just piled up in a hurry.

One time, though, we were caught napping. That time we missed. We saw Father coming with a long hickory switch. We knew what that meant. But there was a little hope still left in Julian's heart, so he proposed that we try working on Father's sympathy. We began by squalling just as loud as we could. Father reached me first. He just smiled a loving smile, and poured it on, and peppered my little legs good. I was squalling and moaning, sitting up and sitting down, but my noise did not seem to affect Father in the least. When it was over, I

was hot all over my back and legs, but I felt very energetic. I don't think I ever felt smarter in my life, and work seemed so sweet to me! Julian had such a big voice, he always could beat me squalling. While Father was pouring hickory-oil on me, he was yelling so loud and squalling so pitifully that the neighbors heard him. Then he looked so penitent and humble that Father brushed him rather lightly. But this was a full dose for us, and it proved to be a good cure.

Once, when we were clearing some ground, picking up and burning the roots and sticks, work got so depressing to me that I concluded something must be done,—or rather, must not be done. So I ate a big breakfast, and discovered after breakfast that I had a slight pain in my stomach. In a hurry, before it had ceased, I announced to Father that I was sick and could not pick up roots and sticks that day. I lay down on my little trundle-bed and rested sweetly till noon. When dinner was ready I was hungry, but I knew a sick boy could not eat, so I kept my bed. After Father had finished eating, he came in and examined my pulse to see if I had any fever. Apparently I was sound asleep, but I heard Father say:

“He needs some calomel.”

Right then I began to get uneasy, for I did hate to take calomel. But he went to work without giving me the calomel and I began to improve rapidly till, by night, I had completely recovered.

It was a number of years before Father knew for

sure just how sick I was not. At that time I did not think it to his interest to know.

That night I felt that I had sinned, and my pain changed from my stomach to my conscience, and I was very sick.

Children, don't try to deceive, for,—sure as you do,—it will make your conscience and your little heart sick.

## XXXIII

### CHEWED VESTS

SOME cows have a fondness for eating cloth. A pair of pants, a coat, or a vest they like best. They seem to have an aching void that only these can fill.

Sometimes it takes only the arm of a coat or one leg of a pair of pants to serve as a dessert for a cow that has been feeding on bushes all morning.

My brother John had a coat that was the delight of his life. One cold winter morning this coat was worn to the place where he was clearing a forest. When noon came, a glance toward his coat revealed a good-looking old cow standing off at one side, innocently masticating a sleeve. She enjoyed the coat-sleeve chewing much more than John did. This was a noted old cow in our neighborhood. She had the capacity of a coat a day,—if she could get it. She kept her digestive organs well stocked with coat-tails, vest-buttons, and breeches-legs.

Children, I want to tell you how my Father got caught one time. Some distance from our farm we had forty acres of timber-land. There was no house near. It was a solitary woodland, with a deep ravine running through it. I once thought this was

the home of lonesomeness. The timber grew high,—very high,—and wild pea-vines and grasses matted the ground, while a cool stream ran its dark waters slowly along in the center of the ravine. Mosses covered the ground, and ferns dipped their fronds into the water along the brink of the stream. The hoot-owl, even in the day-time, hooted his lonely hoot in the tall tree-tops, and the squirrel ran undisturbed up and down and about the trees. The cawing of the crow on the distant hillside and the lowing of an old cow, eating among the grass and wild pea-vines, sometimes broke the stillness of nature.

It was into this dark ravine that Father led his boys one spring day to make palings. When we went to this place to work, we always took our dinner and stayed till dusk. On this morning it was cool, and the boys and Father wore their vests. The vests were soon pulled off and hung around on saplings. The *clack, clack, clack* of the axes broke the stillness of the ravine. Every one was busy, and the day passed quickly. The shades of night settled down into the hollow and as the shadows gathered, Father said:

“Boys, it is time to quit.”

Every boy made for his vest. In a minute the boys found vests without any backs to them and just a narrow strip of cloth constituted the front,—chewed strings and pure air the back. These vests, held up in the gathering gloom, nearly have tickled these mischievous sons of Father’s to death. But

these vests had cost poor Father money, and he was soon afflicted with the idea of "awful carelessness" in his sons for not hanging them higher up, in the tops of the trees, as it were. Every little Lark dropped his feathers, like young chickens in the rain, and stood meekly around while Father poured a flood of scoldings that was a good antidote for the lonely hoot of the owls.

Father had almost reached the place of pouring on the hickory-oil when Julian, in his floundering about, seeking rest and finding none, came upon the fragments of another vest. Its remains indicated that it had been an unusually large one. He held it up before the troubled eyes of Father. One look at it sewed his mouth together, and spread a smirky grin over his face. That vest marked an ugly period in his discourse, and wrote "Finis" to it.

Father carried the heads and tails of his vest home that night, and these heads and tails seemed to oppress his feelings. Some old cow had digested nearly all the middle section. Yes, some old cow with a very, very long neck had reached up and got his vest and eaten it. Or some old cow had stood up on her hind legs and got his vest and eaten it. Or some old cow had got hold of the sapling, which held Father's vest, with her horns, and pulled the sapling down and eaten the vest. Or some old cow had found Father's vest down where she could easily get it and she ate it.

These mischievous sons just could not help it; they had very sore sides that night, and Mother's

sides got sore too. But Father's sides kept sound and well,—only a little contracted. His sons could easily read on the shadows playing across his face that night:

“Children, be sure your own vest is not chewed. Be sure you are right before you correct others.”

## XXXIV

### THE LOCKED-UP LADDER

WHEN our dog barked at night we felt almost sure some one was prowling about the place, or something was after the chickens. No matter what we were doing when the dog began to bark, we noisy boys must be quiet as mice. Father would turn his head a little to one side, put on a meditating look, and begin to say:

"Listen, listen, listen! hush, boys."

We had all hushed when he began, and were sitting as still and stiff as if we had been sacks of meal placed about the room. Again Father would say:

"Hush, hush, hush, Mary Ann (Mary Ann was Mother). Something is killing the chickens. Listen, listen, listen! *Sic, sic, sic*, Nero! Who? My, my, Mary Ann! Be still, boys, be still. Listen, hush, hush, hush! [A little lower each time.] Listen, li—whoopee."

Usually about this time something or somebody would be seen leaving our chicken-roost.

One Christmas time we boys had an unusual supply of mischief on hand, and somehow it turned toward this peculiar way of Father's. So we decided it would be great fun to produce one of these



episodes just described. It nearly tickled us to death just to think of it. We felt about as Lafayette did when he was small. One day he saw a good chance to scare one of us by slipping up behind us, so he slipped and slipped till he was almost ready to jump, but just then he giggled out and spoiled the fun. The very thought of how scared we would be made him giggle.

We boys slept upstairs, and to come down we had to pass through the room where Father and Mother slept (later there was a stairway built on the outside of the house). We knew that would not do, so, before bedtime one of the boys was delegated to slip quietly out and to place a ladder against the house, under the upstairs window.

Bedtime came, and we boys retired. We looked just as sleepy and as serious as we possibly could. In a short time all was quiet both up- and downstairs. We had a vision of Father and Mother sound asleep, and, of course, we boys had been snoring for some time. Very quietly we dressed and filed down the ladder on the outside of the window. Then we slipped out to the chicken-house and pulled a great big fat hen off the roost, expecting her to squall, but not a squall would she raise. So we tried another one, but neither would she squall.

We concluded we would run with her anyway, and risk making her squall. So away we went with her, up through the orchard. By pulling the old hen's feathers and thumping her on the back, we finally succeeded in getting her to squall some, but not as we

wanted her to squall. As we ran the dog came out after us barking. One of the boys was sure he heard Father say:

"Listen!"

We knew then that the fun had begun, and we just snickered and snickered to ourselves. We were tickled all over about it. Away we ran through the orchard, pounding and pulling our hen. The dog came barking, but when he caught up with us he seemed real glad to see us and did not care to bark any more. We ran real fast through the orchard and into a dark thicket, for we were afraid of Father and his long rifle. While we were in the thicket we still pounded on our hen and kept her squalling some. But no Father came after us. We listened and waited, but he did not come. After a while we heard a noise and we thought sure he was coming, but it was sister, who came out and in a very half-hearted, and, we thought, a kind of hypocritical way, she hallooed:

"Sic him, hee, sickum, Nero!"

Soon our pounding became monotonous, both to us and the hen. She showed her lack of interest by not squalling. Poor thing! We beat her unmercifully that night, and we never did understand why she would not squall.

The night grew darker and we got cold and a little impatient. Then we heard another noise. This time it was the smoke-house door that opened and then shut, and all was quiet again. Just at this junc-

ture we lost all interest in our hen-pounding and concluded we had better go home. So we did. We had a peculiar feeling, just as if we had been caught. After talking it over we decided to send one boy around to the window as a spy, to see if our ladder was still there. It seemed that he was gone a long time, and when he did come back he said the ladder was not there. Well, now the question was: What shall we do? We would have to go back through Father's and Mother's room, for we knew our ladder was locked up in the smoke-house with the meat, but we had not forgotten that we were boys and that we could climb. We climbed up the log wall to our room. But we were humiliated when we remembered that Father, more than likely, could see our feet as we climbed past his window. All seven boys were soon fast asleep, and perhaps dreaming of pounding on an old hen or climbing a log wall.

Next morning Father seemed in an unusually good humor, but there were seven of the Larks whose feathers were turned the wrong way, and who were not particularly anxious to discuss the adventures of the night before. Father had not forgotten about the "chewed vests," and he was glad to have something to balance with that. Frequently, for years the "locked-up ladder" and the "chewed vests" were interesting topics of conversation in "The Larks' Nest."

We intended to play a practical joke on Father, and we got practically joked. Did you ever know

that it is easier to joke than to be joked? Some people do not like to take what they prescribe for others.

If this has been true of you, children, I hope you will not be that way any longer.

## XXXV

### STEALING TURNIPS

ONE clear night Father was out in the yard when he heard a wagon stop over on the road, near our turnip patch. Father thought maybe he had better step over and see what the man wanted. When he got there, the man had loaded some turnips into his wagon and was just starting on up the road toward our house. Father did not call to him but climbed over the fence and walked hurriedly after him. The man did not see Father until he walked up beside his wagon and asked the driver if he might ride with him, as he was very tired. Father was tired, tired by his hard day's work and tired of having his turnips stolen.

The man permitted him to ride. As Father climbed into the wagon, he managed to crawl right over his pile of turnips, and innocently remarked that the man had a fine lot of turnips.

"Yes," was the reply, "those are fine. I got them down at Alma."

Father sat down by the side of the man and began to talk to him. The pile of turnips and Father soon got to be a heavy load. As they reached the

place where Father should get out, he turned to the man and said:

"I know where you got these turnips. I saw you getting them out of my patch. I would have given them to you had you asked me for them. Are you not ashamed of yourself? What will you say to your wife and children when they ask: 'Where did you get these fine turnips?' Will you tell them a falsehood, or tell them that you stole them?"

The man became very penitent and told Father that he would give them back to him. But Father refused to take them.

"You must take them home with you," he said, "but I want you to promise me that you will never steal again."

The man promised, so they parted,—the man with the turnips, a good measure of advice, and a promise from Father that he would not have him arrested and punished by law; Father with a hope that he had helped the man to a better life.

We are not sure that the wife and little ones ever saw the turnips. We have a faint idea that they never did. In our mind we have a picture of a man stopping his team in a stream of water near our house, and, stooping meekly over a pile of turnips, pouring them out into the water. Don't you imagine that over the wicked man's head was written: "Be sure your sin will find you out"?

## XXXVI

### WAYS OF THE WICKED

CHRISTIANITY is a great power for good and can bring about wonderful changes. I had the privilege of watching its effect in our neighborhood. When we moved into this neighborhood there was a kind of preaching being done, but it left a crowd of young men who were gamblers, disturbers of public worship and the private home, and, in addition to these, some thieves. They were left unconverted, and their hearts were sinful. But when our Methodist Church was organized and our consecrated preachers came to us, a new, brighter, and higher standard of life began.

I have seen men sitting around flat rocks, throwing their cards many a time. It was no secret thing. Our schoolhouse was a gathering place for such men. Night was kind enough to conceal their miserable meetings and awful deeds of sin.

Father led in the correcting of this state of affairs. He was positive in his work, and this for a while brought on him the wrath of this group of men.

I remember once, after the quietness of a Sabbath day had passed, our family gathered around

the big fireplace to enjoy a pleasant evening together. The older ones were reading, and we little ones were down on the floor making houses out of chips. All was quiet except for the low talking of us little fellows as we erected walls of our house.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!* What a terrible noise! Then something fell against our door.

The older ones jumped, and we children began to cry. Julian said he thought it was a big bear trying to get in, but it was rocks thrown against our door. Father seized his big long rifle, which bore on its barrel the date 1812, and rushed out in defense of our home. In a moment, *bang! bang!* sang out his gun on the still night air. In five or ten minutes he returned, and we boys blared wildly at him to see what dead thing he had brought back, whether bear, bird, or man. But no; he had only split a great big piece of night wide open,—Sunday night at that. I guess the men bumped old night pretty hard getting away, and hated us just as fiercely as ever. They changed in their attitude toward us afterwards, but it was not by the power of gunpowder. Men can face a gun, but there is something before which they run, falter, and fall.

When Father put his old rifle in place and sat down, looking so brave to us, we felt safe. But when he took down the old Bible and read chapter after chapter, and got down on his knees, with us all kneeling around him, and prayed for protection, and prayed for those very men who had thrown rocks at our house, and had commended us all into



the hands of our Heavenly Father, we were safe. No evil would come near our dwelling-place.

These men believed Father to be their enemy, and tried on another occasion to kill him with stones.

He was making syrup down at the spring below the house. He had the old-time boxes to boil the cane juice in. These were big boxes in which you could pour a barrel of juice to boil it down to a syrup. He always finished one of these barrels of juice after night. On this particular night, he,—hot and tired,—was skimming the syrup, when, *clatter! clatter! clatter!* came rocks down around him like big hailstones. There was none of us with him except John. The clattering of rocks was closely followed by the *bump! bump!* of feet hitting the ground at intervals, for the assailants were leaving by leaps and bounds.

Father did not have his gun and poor night escaped this time, but had to bear to the leapers a heavy load of balm similar to that used on us boys when we were found lazily killing the grass.

Mother and we boys heard Father's words hitting the trees and hills in every direction. His tongue spun out words in a hurry. He told them how low, mean, and wicked it was to endanger the lives of his family, and how they were sinning against God. It was a real sermon, and peradventure, they sprinkled their pathway with penitent tears. I know they never forgot this appeal on that night.

Some of them did not love Father much, but seemed to have a great attachment for his meat-

house and corn-crib. One of them made a neighborly call on our corn-crib one night, and gorged his sack with corn, then started home. Father always kept a great drove of hogs. They were prolific squealers and eaters. When the thief slipped by with his corn the hogs started out after him,—it may be to collect Father's toll. Father heard the procession passing, and hurriedly ran out to listen. The hogs caught up with the poor man in his flight, and he threw down a little corn to appease their hunger, then grabbed his well-earned corn and ran. But Arkansas "razorbacks" can beat a man running with a sack of corn. Soon they raised an appealing squeal for another allowance. He gave them some more corn, but this did not last long, and they were soon squealing for more. Did you ever hear Arkansas "razorbacks" squeal for corn? They eat and squeal at the same time. This poor man had to divide with them again before Father heard his hogs give his neighbor a final, loud, farewell squeal as he leaped over the fence with his sack. He probably had some corn left, but he did not have as much as he had when he started from the crib.

One evening Father and Mother walked over to a neighbor's house to talk with them till bedtime. As they walked across our farm, they happened upon our turnip patch, and as they did two men happened,—in a hurry,—to get out of it. They did not stop to ask Father's permission to get a few turnips to eat for their stomach's sake, but ran down the hillside and across the field like some instrument

wound up to run a race with a cyclone. Their object seemed to be to keep ahead of a bullet that they must have thought would be sent after them. I do not know why, for Father had never killed one of them in his life. Perhaps they ran from his powerful, wonderful, mighty tongue, thinking it mightier than a sword; anyway, they ran. This tickled Father and Mother,—this running. The men leaped over our high fence, but not until they had run across a patch of our unpicked cotton, out of which patch our little fingers pulled over a bale to the acre.

That night had scarcely hung his curtain behind the western horizon before we children had advanced into this cotton patch to work. What a sight greeted us! Our turnip patch visitors, of the night before, had each "straddled" a row of cotton, and they "rowed" from one end of it to the other. Fortunately, their natural inclination was to get out of Father's field, or they might have "rowed" backwards and forwards a number of times. Cotton was scattered in every direction, and before we children had gathered up the last of it our poor tired little selves said:

"Surely, bad men get out of a bad deed in a bad way."

One night these bad men tried to kill Father while he was at church. Just before preaching he was out walking; it was getting dark, and in his walk he came upon some men playing cards. Father kindly reproved them and passed on. They thought

he would report them to the grand jury, and their determination seemed to be to kill him.

After preaching was over, Father stepped out on the church step. He was met by a man who had a rock drawn on him. The man was just ready to throw the rock at Father's head, when Clark Johnson, a friend of Father's, grabbed his arm; and Sam O'Bryant stood just behind the man, with a chair drawn on him, intending to knock him down should he move to throw his rock. A crowd of people,—men and women,—gathered around Father, some of the women crying and screaming. Father's enemy was overpowered, and the plot to kill him failed. He was protected there and guarded home. We felt when we heard of his narrow escape that "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord," and that men and angels encamp around a good man to guard and deliver him.

Father lived to see all these enemies of his become his friends. The ringleader, during a revival, became a seeker of Christ's pardoning love; he went to his home from the revival service; his evil heart told him he was going to die, and die lost forever. He was in terror. The darkness of the night added new terror to his soul. In his anguish, he sent in haste for Father to come and pray for him,—Father whom he had thought of as his enemy! Father went in a hurry to him, and knelt down beside him and began to pray for his soul. These two knelt there for a long while, till peace came to this man's soul.

With his conversion that night all the rest of Father's enemies became his friends.

Love will melt a heart of stone. The man who loves his enemies loves God. All ends well to him who lives right and loves and serves God. If you believe a thing is right, stick to it. Right will at last prevail. We can remember so well that period of our family history when our home was in constant peril, but the Lord led us out into a large place of home and community, love and peace. It was beautiful, like a sunny day after a stormy night.

## XXXVII

### THE PROTRACTED MEETING

WHEN we were to have a protracted meeting the preparation began several days beforehand. The women scoured and cleaned every crevice and corner. Great stacks of pies were cooked and stored away, and sacks of tea-cakes were hidden from us hungry boys. The smell of boiling ham came from the kitchens everywhere. Canned fruits, jellies, jams, and such sweets had been prepared long before and were ready for use.

Our Circuit Rider came, and on Saturday night the meeting began. There was a good crowd that night, but on Sunday the people came from ten and twelve miles away. Uncle Bob Anderson, Uncle Jimmie Newberry, and Uncle Mac Langston brought their wives and came to stay with some of us who were near,—until the meeting was over.

On Sunday evening, a "grove meeting" was held. The men went one direction and the women another, and they engaged in a song and prayer service till "early candle lighting," then preaching began. God had met with His people while they were in the grove praying, and the power of God was felt that night.

## THE PROTRACTED MEETING 143

Several came, weeping, to the altar, but no one was converted.

At ten o'clock Monday morning an experience meeting was conducted by Uncle Mac. He was a fatherly-looking old man, over six feet high, a little stooped, and he had a long gray beard. Everybody loved him.

Those present sang the good old songs, and one by one gave their experiences. Old Aunt Bettie sat over in the "Amen Corner." Now Aunt Bettie wore a black sunbonnet,—a shawl around her shoulders. She limped somewhat when she walked. She got up to give her experience and everybody listened. Tears came in her eyes, and her mouth quivered as she spoke. She raised her old wrinkled hand, with its long, bony fingers, and wiped the tears from her eyes, and began to talk of her home and her past life. Her husband had been dead many years. He died leaving her with a large family of small children. She had lived by making a small crop of cotton and corn each year. She had worked in the field during the day and washed, sewed, knitted, and patched at night. But we remembered her always as happy. She sang a great deal. Once I went to her door and saw her scrubbing away, after a hard day's work, and as she scrubbed she sang:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly."

She looked up and, seeing me, said:

"Fred, I am so happy, because I know Jesus loves my soul."

I went there another time and found the door closed, but heard a voice from the inside. I knocked, but no one came. I knocked again, but no one came, so I opened the door and looked in. There was Aunt Bettie down on her knees in prayer, with her little family all gathered about her. Her face was raised toward the roof of her cabin, for there was no ceiling there, and tears were in her eyes then. She was holding family prayers, and I felt that Heaven was near.

Remembering all these things, we at the meeting were held spellbound by this poor woman. She said:

"I had a hard time supporting my family. Sometimes I could not see where we were to get anything to eat, but it always came. We lived hard, but I was happy. I get, oh, so tired of this old world, but I try not to think of that, for Heaven, my home, and rest seem to be just before me, and I cry: Bless God and press on towards home. Oh, to-day I am so happy! It won't be long until I will be up y——."

She raised her old wrinkled hand just as high towards Heaven as she could and sat down.

God's spirit was there. Some wept and others began to shout. Good Old Uncle Mac shouted and at the same time sang:

"E'en down to old age, all my people shall prove  
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn;  
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne."



That night Uncle A. Anderson became greatly enthused. Uncle A. was an old man, very tall, with a long white beard, blue eyes, and a regular, extending nose. He wore a long linen duster, and looked as if he was afflicted with "preachery" thoughts. He could tell fortunes for the young people, chew burning coals of fire, and eat hot lead and more sweet tobacco than any man I ever saw. The sermon had been preached and penitents were weeping in the altar, when a long rasping, cracking voice sounded high in the church. Everybody looked; Uncle A. had started a song,—“Old Time Religion.” He had taken the top and bottom off the verse, twisted the music around and circled it up above somehow. No one else sang. They had a very serious laugh about that time. The whole congregation caught it. It might have been more serious, but the pastor gave relief by starting another song. Uncle A. came very near singing the meeting's funeral knell that night.

On another night he became enthused. We were suddenly startled by the same rasping voice, but without a tune this time. He jumped up from the side of his wife and started down the aisle, shouting. His peculiar shout was turned into a set speech. He got faster and faster, till he came across the aisle and started for the pulpit. Now he fairly ran, and his linen duster just blistered the air, as he cried:

“O, Jimmie, my son! my son! Jimmie, my son! Jimmie, my son!”

The north pole seemed to establish itself among the Christians, and a great gale of laughter swayed the sinners. Jimmie was back in the audience, cursing his dear papa and had no inclination toward religion.

Why? Children, can you tell why Uncle A. almost ruined the meeting while Aunt Bettie was a blessing to it?

On Sunday night Brother Frank Naylor was going to preach for our pastor, Brother H. A. Storey. The men and women had their "grove meeting" and came into the house singing and shouting. Brother Naylor tried to preach, but the people continued to shout, and he quit preaching and called penitents. The altar was soon filled, and sinners were weeping all over the congregation. I cannot describe what followed. Old Mountain View Church seemed to be ablaze with the fires of God. Twenty-five souls were saved that night, and no sermon preached. Everybody in that vast audience either shouted, laughed, or wept.

The meeting continued, and sinners were saved.

One night Miss Lee, a lovely young woman, would not go home until she was saved. All those who were not especially interested in her went home, some remained and sang the songs that might be of help to her, but no relief came to her soul. Her face was a picture of agony and distress. As earnest prayers as I ever heard were prayed for her, but the darkness seemed to gather around her soul until they sang that old hymn:

## THE PROTRACTED MEETING 147

"Pass me not, O gentle Savior,  
Hear my humble cry,  
While on others thou art calling,  
Do not pass me by."

With the quickness of lightning, the shadow left Miss Lee's face and a light came into her eyes. She smiled,—a smile of glory, it seemed. I have seen the light of the setting sun glimmering on the snow-covered crags of the mountains, but it was not like the light on her face. And I have seen the rising sun flash his brilliant light against dark, floating clouds; that was beautiful, but not so beautiful as the light on this girl's face. What made it that way? The agnostic cannot see it. He says it is nothing. The non-spiritual say it is imagination. But I say: Surely it is God shining there. When I reach glory, I believe I will see millions of faces shining as hers did then.

The meeting closed, and only the judgment will reveal the good that was done.

## XXXVIII

### A JEALOUS CHURCH

WHEN we moved into our neighborhood there was no Methodist class nor church there. There was a church, but I will leave you to guess of what denomination. In a short time Father got the few Methodists of the community together and organized a class of seven members. The organizing of this class met with great opposition, led by the church I referred to.

The second year after the class was organized, our pastor's name was Rev. G. W. Wood. He was a good man and a good singer. He was of medium height, heavily built, had red hair and a heavy beard of the same color. He was a jolly man and a good laugh. He could ring out his ha! ha! ha! in the most laugh-provoking way I ever heard.

The leader of our jealous church was a little fiery preacher who had been baptized in the apostolic way, had found out that there was no Holy Spirit given now, that the "mourners' bench" was a farce, and that shouting was pure excitement. He was bald-headed and had blue eyes under a narrow forehead, which slightly receded from his eyes. He was a little, jumping man and walked with his hands, in

a big swinging motion. His very look indicated a man that knew he was right.

The time came for our protracted meeting. Brother Wood started it in his businesslike way. His preaching was solid, and his singing was good. In fact, this alone would have drawn a crowd. The Holy Spirit came down upon the people, mourners came to the altar and were saved,—wonderfully saved,—and there were many shouts in the camp of the Lord. This aroused our neighbor church. They had ridiculed our little class of seven saying: "They cannot do anything." But when mourners came to the altar and the shouting began, they felt that this must be stopped. So they decided that they would crush it with one blow.

The little preacher was to do that. He came to the service one night, and after the usual weeping and shouting, after the sweet singing, after the benediction had been pronounced, our red-headed preacher started down the aisle to go home. He was met by the little bald-headed preacher, right in a big crowd, mostly of his own denomination. The little preacher had caught him there in order to make it more embarrassing for Brother Wood, and to make this blow the more powerful. He said to him:

"I want to know, sir, by what authority you have this mourners' bench?"

Brother Wood looked down on him out of his laughing eyes, threw back his head, laughed one of his big ha! ha! ha! ha! laughs, and walked off and left the little preacher standing there. He wilted

like a squash cut from its roots, and was never known to repeat anything like that again.

One of the converts of that meeting is one of the leading preachers of the North Arkansas Conference, another became a worker for God among the young people of our community, but has long since gone home to Heaven. Our little class of seven has grown to a strong church. They built their house of worship on a large hill and named it Mountain View. The church that fought the work of the Holy Spirit died. They have no church at all now.

A work of God will grow in spite of ridicule, criticism, and persecution, and work carried on to oppose it will die. Let us throw in our life with God and His cause and thereby possess immortal life.

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

## XXXIX

### THE YOUNG MEN'S PRAYER MEETING

IN the year 1884 the Conference sent us a brilliant young preacher, whose name was T. Farguson. He was a promising young man, and we were delighted; but during the winter a cloud came over his character, and he left his work. He went away in shame and disgrace. Then a gloom came over our whole community. I never remember to have seen my father and mother sadder than at this time. No, not even in the presence of death.

For several months we had no pastor, but in June we were so happy when we learned we were to have for our pastor, a young man who had just graduated from Vanderbilt University. His name was Crowder B. Moseley. I remember I wondered how a university man would look, and if he would not feel that he was better than were we poor country people. Would he be kind to us children and love us? was another thing I wondered about, because I expected to be converted that year,—as I have told you when I spoke of my conversion.

In a few weeks Brother Moseley came. He was soon loved by everybody, and he loved everybody. He made himself one of us. We never had a more

popular pastor. Those who were out of the church loved him just as much as those within, it seemed. He became all things to all men; and it was to win some,—yes, many. He came to us all tired out from his school work, but he did not just sit around and read. He almost put his very life right in with us boys and girls, especially the boys. He almost lived in our home, and he spent days in the field with us. He worked with us and talked to us and lived right where we were. In all our close association I never heard one story, or even remark, that in the most remote way hinted at the obscene or vulgar. I longed to be as good as he was and wished that I could be a preacher. Good preachers can do lots of good, can't they, children? Father and Brother Moseley were like father and son. Father gave him a pair of saddle-bags. Brother Moseley used them until conference and then returned them for he was going to be a foreign missionary and did not need them. Father kept them as a sacred treasure, because he loved Brother Moseley so much. The old saddle-bags still hang in the log-room in our home.

I hardly need to tell you, children, that we had a great meeting that summer. It was held in August, and that meeting shines in my life like a golden torch. The night I was converted there were two of my brothers (Julian and Will), a cousin,—Quince Galloway,—J. W. O'Bryant, and others converted. Brother Moseley took us all into the church, under a brush arbor, right where the Mountain View Church stands to-day. On that afternoon, after we



were taken into the church, Brother Moseley called J. H. O'Bryant, J. J. Galloway, John S. Lark, James Smith, and Ruff Burton together and organized a "Young Men's Prayer Meeting." It was known by this name for years. These young men promised to meet each Wednesday night, rain or shine, hot or cold,—nothing was to prevent. Just five boys and a pastor, whom they would die by, were the visible number in that group, but the Lord was present and heard that covenant and wrote their names in Heaven. Brother Moseley soon went to the mission fields; but the boys still met in their prayer meeting.

In a few months J. W. O'Bryant, Q. R. Galloway, and F. A. Lark became members of the Prayer Meeting. They had no church in which to meet during that winter, so they met in the old dilapidated Walker Schoolhouse. I shall never forget those blessed prayer meetings we had that winter.

One Wednesday night, when the wind was bitter cold and the snow fell through the big cracks in the old schoolhouse, and we hovered around an old broken box stove, we prayed and told our experiences. Amid all of this, the light of the glory of God shone down upon us and in us, until we all got happy. J. H. O'Bryant broke forth in a shout of praise, J. J. Galloway laughed, and John Lark's face just shone. We often had meetings like this. Around that altar friendships were formed that have never been broken. John Lark and James Smith soon went away to glory. Only God knows how much these companions meant to me when

Brother John was taken from us. God bless each of them!

I found a bosom companion in Quince Galloway, who was one of the purest men I ever knew. I love him yet in perfect Christian love. In that prayer meeting, there burned a fire of consecration, liberality, and zeal that has never gone out. Mountain View Church was built, and out of that church have gone eight preachers of the gospel,—seven Methodist preachers and one Baptist preacher,—one Young Men's Christian Association secretary, and numbers of leading laymen, many of them official members of the church. The work goes on, and on, and on,—into eternity. There will be a great company that will come up to the Great White Throne redeemed who can trace their redemption to that prayer meeting, or still further back to the God-given agent, under the Holy Spirit, Rev. C. B. Moseley, who died in nineteen hundred and sixteen.

“And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”

## XL

### A DINNER FOR THE PREACHERS

OUR home has always been a home for preachers, as many of them can testify. To us children the greatest man in the world was a Methodist preacher. It was our delight to take his horse and feed it,—feed it well,—catch it, and saddle it for him, or do any little turn we could to help him. In the home we had what we called “the prophet’s bed.” This bed was first occupied by Brother James A. Anderson.

In 1885, Father went to the annual conference at Van Buren, Ark. On their way home five of the preachers came by our place, to eat dinner with us. The conference closed on Sunday night, and Monday was the day they were to take dinner with us. That was a great day for us children. Just to think of five preachers, all at once! Then, too, there was a good chicken dinner to think about, and other good things. It was the sole topic of conversation all morning long.

This morning was a cool one, a windy November day, and Father, who had come home early from conference, with us seven boys, made an early start for the cotton-field. We reluctantly left the chicken

and other good things for Mother and Sister to prepare.

The dinner for a preacher was always the very best that could be prepared, and we boys knew it; consequently, our little clock we carried to the field struck twelve about ten o'clock; and it just kept striking till we saw two pairs and a half of preachers coming down the hill toward our home. Then Father told us we might quit and go to the house. There was a dashing of cotton sacks, an emptying of cotton, knocking boys' feet out from under them;—seven whooping, yelling boys, kicking, jumping and running across the field was the following scene.

But when we came into the august presence of five preachers, we were as quiet as mice. After shaking hands with the preachers, we stole away and went to feed their horses. Soon after we came back to the house Mother announced dinner, and Father led the five preachers into the dining-room. We boys followed not far off.

Father occupied the head of the table; at his right was a tall, raw-boned young preacher, who had just joined the conference. The rest of the preachers were seated around the table, with lucky boys interspersed. Julian and I had to wait. I stood behind the tall young preacher, just far enough back not to bother him, and Julian occupied a similar place on the other side of the table.

Just in front of father was a big dish of fried chicken,—nice and brown. I was looking at it, and I saw three big fine gizzards all close together. My

mouth just watered. What is better than a good old chicken gizzard? Father passed the chicken to the tall young preacher first, instead of passing it to good old Brother Waldon, who was on his left; and what do you think happened? Well, just this: That raw-boned preacher rolled out on his plate the last one of those three gizzards, and sat there and "chawed" them all down,—in a hurry, too,—right before our eyes.

Wrath and indignation fairly boiled in my veins, and the "lucky" boys' eyes flashed fire, and poor, humble Julian!—his hair almost stood on end. Father's smiling face,—for he was perfectly delighted,—and Mother's sweet countenance seemed to say it was all right. So we boys cooled off and choked down our ire, thinking it not worth while to grieve over "chawed" gizzards, for evidently we could not get them.

But in our home we still laugh and tell of the big, tall, raw-boned gizzard—"chawing" young preacher.

## XLI

### THE PRESIDING ELDER

FATHER was a great believer in the Methodist economy. He thought there was no system on earth like it, and this was instilled into the very life of his children. No Presiding Elder or Bishop was ever criticised in our home. Their acts were considered of God. To us the greatest man that ever came into our home was the Presiding Elder. We thought of the Bishop as way off,—somewhere toward Heaven. There was a time when we never expected to see one.

I remember the first time I saw Father with a Bishop. It was Bishop Duncan. Father sat by him and listened like a child listening to its father. The man who was not afraid on the battle-field of Gettysburg was as timid as a woman in the presence of this Bishop.

The Mountain View Church was organized in the big room of our log house, around the old fireplace, and the first Quarterly Conference was held there. The Presiding Elder was Uncle Tom Smith. After he had preached one of his great sermons at eleven o'clock, he proceeded to take the old orthodox missionary collection.

The second Presiding Elder was Rev. I. L. Burrow. I was just a little boy, but I remember once when he was preaching at eleven o'clock suddenly a flash of light seemed to emanate from his coal-black eyes, as he threw back his head and stood very erect. His whole audience was electrified, and a shout went up. I said in my heart then: "That was God's light." I still feel the warmth of it in my soul.

Rev. James A. Anderson came next. We were in the Clarksville District then, and this was his first work as a Presiding Elder. One night he held Quarterly Conference, and it was cold. We had a big, popping fire of hickory logs. He stood in the northwest corner of the big room and preached his fearless gospel, as only he could do. Between him and the fire sat Uncle Billie Walker, an old-time Campbellite. Brother Anderson said:

"You may bury a sinner two miles deep in the middle of the sea, and it will not wash away his sins."

Well, between Brother Anderson and that hickory fire, Uncle Billie almost twisted into little pieces the hickory-bottomed chair that he sat on.

There were many other Presiding Elders who came into our humble home, and each one made a rich contribution to the sweetness of our home life. George W. Hill walked from Alma,—seven miles,—to our home. He did not see me in the corn-field, by the roadside, as he came down the long, red hill

to the house, because he had his head down and was studying.

V. V. Harlan was the man who gave me my first love for missions; and he got a big collection for missions at Pope's Schoolhouse. The "old timers" said it could not be done, for until this time no one had ever given one cent; but when they heard that matchless missionary sermon, they did not have to be begged to give. They wanted to give.

F. S. H. Johnston came with Uncle Tom Smith and preached at eleven o'clock one Saturday. I thought if I could only preach as he did I would be satisfied.

D. J. Weems walked seven miles to see me once, when I was sick. He prayed for me, and I cried for joy. He also licensed me to preach.

Then there were Ed. Steele, Stonewall Anderson, Henry Hanesworth, William Sherman, James Hughey, and others. We loved them all. They helped us and made our home more Christian-like.

When the Quarterly Conference time came, we knew we would have lots of company. Father never failed to invite visitors home with him. Mother would boil a ham in the wash-pot, and fix all the concomitants necessary for good eating. I have seen as many as forty eat at my Father's long table. What a jolly crowd! And we boys usually had a sweetheart or two in the crowd. Father and Mother always fasted on Friday. We children were allowed to do as we liked about that. Prayer was offered for the services at each time of family worship.



There was preaching Saturday,—morning and night. By Sunday at eleven o'clock, usually, the power came, and there was shouting, and often souls were saved. When the missionary collection was taken, Father made his contribution large for a man of his means, and when we were old enough, he gave fifty cents or a dollar for each of us. The first money I ever gave was paid for me by Father, and I can remember how proud I was when my name was called.

We had very little silver or gold, but we had a greater heritage,—a home where preachers were always not only welcomed, but wanted, and many other treasures that will abide forever.

## XLII

### BROTHER FERGUSON'S SERMON

WHEN Quarterly Conferences were new in our community, a great interest was taken in them. It was the principal topic of conversation whenever the people were gathered together.

Uncle Tom Smith, our first Presiding Elder, had captivated every one, and especially Father, and at the time I am writing about he was coming again. I remember how excited we children were on the Friday before the Quarterly Conference, which was to begin the next day. In the morning Father had us hitch our mules, old Gin and Wolf, to the wagon, and we watched him as he drove away. He was going to Alma to get the Presiding Elder, who was to come to Alma on the two o'clock train. As Father reached Alma about eleven o'clock, he fed old Gin and Wolf out of the back of the wagon-bed, and went down in town to visit among his friends and do a little trading.

When two o'clock came, Father was on the platform at the station, ready to greet Uncle Tom Smith. Father's keen eyes saw every one that got off of the train, but Uncle Tom Smith did not get off. Father looked again, for fear he might be mistaken, but the Elder was not there. He thought of the

people at home,—how disappointed they would be. About that time he walked up to a red-headed, dried-up-looking man and asked him if he happened to know Brother Smith, a Presiding Elder. The red-headed man cast a keen glance back at Father and asked:

“What do you want to know about him?”

Father told him about the Quarterly Conference and that Brother Smith was coming that day to hold it, and that he was there to take him out. The man said:

“Why, he could not come, and I am sent in his place to hold it for you. I am the pastor from Ozark, Arkansas.”

Father looked at the man and his spirits fell. He said to himself:

“Well, no preaching this time.” He looked at him again and thought: “I guess he was all Brother Smith could get to come,—just a make-shift.”

When Father brought him out and the neighbors all got a good look at him, Methodism went down about one hundred per cent. I can almost feel the chill yet that came over us all; but nevertheless, he was treated royally in our home.

On Sunday everybody brought dinner to the meeting-place. We were to have “dinner on the ground,” and a great day it was planned to be; but everybody wore such a look of disappointment because Brother Smith did not come and because they thought the little red-headed man could not preach. At that

time I did not know a good sermon when I heard it, but I could tell when the sermon was good by watching Father's face. He always sat on the seat real close to the preacher in the "Amen corner." Brother Ferguson was our new preacher's name. He took his text, and I began to watch Father's face. At first, he looked gloomy, then I could see that he got interested. Brother Ferguson got deeper into his sermon, and Father began to smile. Soon he was laughing, then he leaned back on his seat and just laughed good. I can see that glorious smile yet, as I think of it. When Brother Ferguson had reached his climax, the power of God had fallen on the congregation. Father laughed (he never shouted), Aunt Sallie Morrison and Uncle Jim Newberry shouted, many cried for joy, and some for their sins. It seemed that all about there was shining the glory of God.

Brother Ferguson went back to Ozark. We never saw him again. He soon preached his last sermon, and went home to Heaven. His church loved him, and over their pulpit for years were the words of his last text:

"O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." It is found in Psalms, the fifty-fifth chapter and sixth verse.

Children, we can't tell what people really are when we just look at their personal appearance. Can we?

"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

## XLIII

### THE CIRCUIT RIDER

My parents were great believers in infant baptism. We were all baptized in the home when only a few months old, for Mother was an invalid during the baby and child life of our home, and could not attend church. The Circuit Rider was continually in our home, and on some of his visits the new baby was baptized. One of the earliest religious services I can remember was when our baby was baptized.

We lived then in the home we first moved to in Arkansas. I was about six years old, and Brother H. C. Jolly was our pastor.

It was a beautiful spring morning, and we children were catching butterflies out in the yard when Brother Jolly rode up to the gate. Father met him with a smile, and we children strung ourselves along the pathway as he came down the path to the little log house. He shook hands with every one of us. I remember he smiled at me, and I smiled back at him, and he said: "God bless you."

To us a Methodist Preacher was the biggest man that ever came into our home. We knew that Father

and Mother loved him, and that they were standing by him and supporting him in his works.

We boys felt that the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon us was for our pastor to give his horse's bridle rein to us and let us put him up and feed him. Brother Boyles would not let us feed his horse for fear we would not feed him enough. His was the biggest horse I ever saw, and he could eat the most. It took fifteen ears of corn and two bundles of fodder to make one meal for him. That was the reason he would not trust us to feed him, but always fed him himself. Brother Jim Martin rode a great, long, gray horse, and when he came over the hill he came like a streak. My! my! how he did travel. Brother Martin and his horse were always together. He would not be separated from him. He always told us that horse would go to Heaven, and that he would see his horse there. He would often say:

"Does not the Bible speak of horses being in Heaven?"

And when his horse had nothing to eat, Brother Martin would not eat.

How we enjoyed the social life of the preacher in our home! I guess there are no better storytellers. And Father was a great talker and a good listener. We children all used to sit around in the big room and listen and listen to them talk and laugh. Then there was the extra good dinner,—chicken or ham,—sure.

One day it was hot and the butter was soft, and

Mother put it in a bowl, and Brother Boyles thought it was gravy, and we boys got awfully tickled because he used a spoon and took so much. We thought he must like butter.

Family worship was no small feature of the preachers' visit. Their prayers are food for our soul. They prayed for us, and some of them prayed for us by name. I remember Brother Frank Naylor learned the names of every member of the family the first night he was ever in our home, and he never failed afterward to call us by the right name. He prayed personally for John, Janie, Fred, and all the rest. God was mighty good to us to let us be reared in a home where preachers came so often.

Every member of our family was converted in a meeting conducted by some one of these preachers. That was perfectly natural, for they had a great influence over us. I heard Brother C. B. Moseley and Mother talking about me once when they did not know that I was near. Brother Moseley said:

"Fred is going to preach."

And then he went on and talked about me in such a tender way, till my heart burned so strangely, and Mother said:

"Yes, I believe he will preach, but I have never spoken to him about it. I want God to do that. I am praying for my boys that God may use them, but I do not want to influence them. I want God to speak to them and make them know His will."

And while they talked God spoke to me as never before in my life, and my heart said: "Yes, they

do not know it, I will be a preacher, and after a while I will be a Bishop."

Thank God my call to preach grew into a flame of life, under the love of these consecrated men of God and the influence of a Christian home, where the father and mother were ever true to their pastor.

I want to tell you about the death of Brother Martin. He died a long time ago, at Dyer, Arkansas. He loved to sing, preach and shout. When he came to the river of death, he called all the young people around him. All that could came into his room, and then he asked them to sing with him his favorite song. With a strong voice he began to sing:

"Sadly we sing with tremulous breath,  
As we stand by the mystical stream,  
In the valley by the river of death,  
And yet it is no more than a dream.  
Only a dream, only a dream,  
And glory across the dark stream;  
How peaceful the slumber, how happy the waking,  
For death is no more than a dream."

As he sang, he began to shout; and with a shout of victory and song, he went up to Glory and to God.

Children and parents, love your pastor and give him a big place in your home. It pays in dollars and cents, in life and death, and in a glorious heavenly home for you and yours.



## XLIV

### FATHER AS A COUNTRY DOCTOR

WE seldom had a doctor in our home. Plenty of fruit, vegetables, butter and milk, corn-bread, and mountain air made a doctor unnecessary,—only as a good friend. If one of us children felt “puny” Father had us poke out our tongue, and after he looked at it, he made his own prescription and filled it out of medicine he always kept in his medicine-box. It was usually calomel that he gave us, and plenty of it. This was followed by a big dose of salts. Gag or no gag, we took it. Father had a way of getting us to take it,—you can imagine the way. It worked like a charm. The only nice thing about being sick was that we were able to stay out of the cotton patch about two days.

In our home was a great big book that told all about all kinds of diseases. It was “Dr. Thompson’s Doctor Book.” I used to read it and imagine I had about a half-dozen different diseases. Father studied this book continually, and he kept all ordinary remedies. They were put away in a tin box and very carefully labeled. He also kept a pair of the old-time balance-scales, and measured all of his medicine by weight. Then he put it in little

papers, as doctors do, and gave it to us in water or sorghum syrup. To this day I can taste blue mass in that mealy syrup. Oh my!

Father not only doctored his own family but he became a doctor for the neighborhood, especially for the poor. Many a poor man living in a humble mountain cabin, who was not able to have a doctor, or who could not get a doctor from town before his child would die, has living children to-day that would have been dead had not Father gone to them. Some of these poor people have children named for Father as a token of their love for his life of service. Many a night after he had worked hard all day, I have seen him put on his big overcoat, take his tin medicine-box, and go to some home where there was sickness. He would be gone several hours, sometimes all night. He knew when a case was serious and would have them send for a professional doctor. He never went for money, for he never took pay from any one. He went because he loved these people, and because they were so poor and needed him.

Father was a good doctor for souls, too. He was a local preacher, he knew soul diseases,—the remedy and how to apply it. When death came he was there to comfort and tenderly to lay away their dead. People of every creed and faith sent for him in their hours of sorrow. I have heard some of them say that they wanted to die before Father died, so that he could bury them and console their loved ones. His last act, and the primary cause of his

death, was to bury the body of one of these friends,—a woman, whose husband he had buried years before. The husband was an old Union soldier and Father was a Confederate, but their love for one another was tender and beautiful.

The day of his last funeral service was cold and damp. He was in no condition to go, but he did not refuse. He stood with his head bare and his feet damp and took a cold, which resulted in his death, but it is sweet to know that he died serving his friends. How tender to see them weep around his casket when he was gone! Many, many of these poor were at the beautiful gate, waiting, watching, and looking for him. That night, when he fell asleep, a smile was on his face, for his heavenly greeting was so wonderful.

His was a beautiful death, children.

As we live, so shall we die.

## EPILOGUE

### THE BIRDS HAVE FLOWN

THE old home still stands where it used to stand, but it is different now. We miss the old-time flowers that used to grow in the yard. The old stone flower-beds are still on either side of the walk that leads to the house, but the grass and weeds grow there now. The shrubs are dying; the lilac bush in the corner of the yard is almost dead, and the vining rose that covered the front porch has rust on its leaves. The once well-kept fences are down. The little house at the spring where Father made syrup, the shop where he spent many days keeping our hoes and plows repaired, the chicken-house where we boys stole the old hen that night, and the smoke-house where Father locked up the ladder are all old now. On rainy days we used to cut our initials on the new logs and plank in the barn, but now they are brown with age, and the barn needs repairing. The once well-beaten path about the farm is covered with growth. The long table in the kitchen is pushed back, because it is not needed any more. The room up-stairs, where we boys slept, is unoccupied. What's the matter? Why, the birds have flown.

There were fourteen little ones who came into the home,—Henry, John, Janie, Jesse, Fred, Julian, Will, Fleming, Milton, Walter, Alpheus, Lafayette, Hattie, and Agnes. Five have gone to God, and nine have gone out into the world to make homes of their own. I cannot imagine what this world would have been had not God given us home life. Mother sits alone by the fireside in the big old log-room. She is the same Mary Ann that Father met at the close of the war. She has the same soft brown hair, for it has never turned gray, and she has the same smiling face; but she is old now. Her face is wrinkled and her form is stooped. Precious Mother!

How we children love to go back home! Mother meets us at the gate now, and she scarcely lets us get out of her sight while we are there. At night she does not get sleepy,—she sits and talks with us until very late, sometimes after midnight. She is interested in everything that interests us. How sweet the sleep on those old fat feather-beds, after we have had a long talk all alone with Mother! She knows just what we children like to eat, and she always fixes it for us. I frequently get a letter from one of the boys, saying:

"I spent some time at home recently and Mother made chicken dumpling for me. It was the best she ever made."

Sometimes, when she is busy with the chicken dumpling, we go alone about over the farm, down

to the persimmon trees, and up to the plum thicket, thinking, thinking of the past.

"Mid pleasures and palaces tho' we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home;  
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,  
Which, seek thro' the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere."

Sometimes Mother will visit for a short while with the children in their homes, but she always wants to go back to "The Larks' Nest." That is still "home" for her,—and for us,—so long as she lives. Milton and his little family live there that they may be company and comfort for her. Our home has been a happy one, but we know we have a happier heavenly home, and one by one we shall all go there. Best of all, Jesus will be there.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

That is what He said when He left us. I have told you about our home here, I can not tell you much about the heavenly home, for the Bible says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

We know that all of our family can never meet around the fireside again, but we can meet around the throne of God, and there will be no parting there.

We are all God's children. Let us live right, and God will take us to our home in Heaven.



**This book is under no circumstances to be  
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

form 410

**MAY 27 1919**